THE ANALYSED BIBLE

G. CAMPBELL MORGAN D.D.

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THE PROPHECY OF ISAIAH. VOL. I

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THE PROPHECY OF ISAIAH

BY THE REV.
G. CAMPBELL MORGAN, D.D.

VOLUME I

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PREFACE

THE Preface to this Volume is found in the Chapter on Isaiah, in Volume II. of "The Analysed Bible."

Herein we proceed at once to the more detailed analysis of what is set forth in bare outline therein.

Familiarity with that outline is necessary to the study of this book.

G. CAMPBELL MORGAN.

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ISAIAH

A. PROPHECIES OF JUDGMENT

THE prophecies of judgment fall into three circles. The first of these contains the messages of the prophet delivered in the course of a public ministry during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, and Ahaz. The second contains the prophet's teaching in the course of a private ministry following upon the break of the prophet with Ahaz. The third contains the prophet's messages in a public ministry during the period of the threatened invasion by Assyria.

The messages of the first circle are largely concerning Judah and Jerusalem. Those of the second deal with the nations and the world. Those of the third have to do with the chosen and the world.

I. FIRST CIRCLE. PUBLIC MINISTRY

This circle of public ministry falls into two parts which are separated from each

other by the prophet's vision at the death of Uzziah. In the first five chapters then, we have his messages during the reign of Uzziah; in the next two the account of his ministry up to the time when he parted with Ahaz and devoted himself to the instruction of a remnant.

i. During the Reign of Uzziah

This section of the prophecy falls into three parts, the first of which consists of a solemn impeachment of the nation; the second is a word of appeal; and the third is a stern denunciation.

a. the impeachment

The first message is of the nature of an impeachment of the nation in which the cause of the controversy between Jehovah and His people is declared; and the necessity for judgment is affirmed.

1. *The Controversy declared*

The heavens and the earth are summoned to hear the complaint of Jehovah against

His people. That complaint is expressed in the terms of His Fatherhood. He had nourished and brought up children; their sin consisted in the fact that they had rebelled against Him. The unnaturalness of the sin is illustrated by a comparison of ignorant Israel with intelligent animals.

This statement of complaint is immediately followed by an interlude containing the appeal of the prophet, in which he first described the moral condition of the people. The nation was sinful. It had inherited evil and continued therein. The activity of the people was that of the forsaking of Jehovah; the reason of it was that they despised the Holy One of Israel; and the issue was that they were estranged.

He then appealed to them as to why they would be stricken. The form of his question put the blame of their suffering on themselves. The reason was that of their own revolt; the result was that they were stricken by Jehovah.

He then described their suffering condition figuratively, as that of a person

covered with wounds which were neither dressed nor treated; then actually, as seen in the condition of their cities and their land; and again figuratively. The appeal ended with a ray of hope as he referred to a remnant.

Again voicing the message of Jehovah, he corrected the prevalent and pernicious idea that relation to Jehovah is conditioned by external acts of worship. Sacrifices and feasts are nothing worth, and God hates them where they are unaccompanied by rectitude of life. His call to them to consider was couched in satirical form as he addressed them as "rulers of Sodom," the "people of Gomorrah." Their way of approach had been false. They had come with sacrifices and offerings which were purposeless and vain; and the words of Jehovah most graphically set this forth; "I cannot away with," "I am weary," "I will hide." He then indicated the true method of approach as being that of moral cleansing rather than that of ceremonial observance; and righteous conduct, rather than that of ritualism.

The final movement in the declaration of controversy, is that of the call of Jehovah to His people. The call itself is expressed in the words, "Let us reason together." No doubt is expressed as to the issue, if they are obedient to that call. Willingness to reason with Jehovah inevitably issues in cleansing from pollution. Nevertheless the alternative issue of such reasoning will be dependent upon their attitude. Obedience will be followed by blessing, and rebellion by destruction.

2. *The Judgment announced*

Because of the fearful corruption of the city, judgment is necessary. That corruption the prophet set forth in vivid and forceful language. The city has fallen from her faithfulness to an attitude which is that of the harlot; from the activities of judgment and righteousness to that of murder. This infidelity is the result of admixture. The silver is become dross, and the wine is mixed with water. The issue is that the princes or rulers are rebellious, the com-

panions of thieves, and corrupt in administration ; while the people are unjudged, and the widows neglected.

The twofold process of judgment is next described. It is first in order to restoration. The avenging stroke falls in order to purification and restoration. The description of this process is closely related to the prophet's account of failure. As that was caused by mixture, judgment is in order to purification from dross and alloy ; and the result is that of the restoration of the judges, and finally of the city to the estate from which it had fallen, of righteousness and faithfulness.

The judgment is also to be that of reprobation in the case of those persisting in transgression. The result of the avenging stroke will be the collapse of superstition, and the destruction of all those whose confidence had been reposed in false gods.

Thus in the impeachment, the case as between Jehovah and His people is clearly stated. His claim upon them is that of

His care for them, and His loving provision for their need. His complaint is that they have failed to respond, and judgment is necessary in order to the restoration of the lost order. While the message of the prophet makes it clear that the Divine anger burns with destructive heat, it is nevertheless abundantly evident that the fierceness of judgment is love, and its purpose is peace.

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b. THE WORD OF APPEAL

Following the broad statement of the case as between Jehovah and His people, we have the prophet's great word of appeal to them. It falls into three parts. The first and the last are visions of the latter days. The central one describes the prevalent corruption, and deals with the judgment.

1. *The Vision of the latter Days*

Standing in the midst of the circumstances of corruption and judgment, the prophet was given a vision of that order of events towards which judgment is to proceed. The Lord's house is seen established and exalted. It is the centre of attraction, not merely for the worshippers of the chosen nation, but to the whole earth. In the day of such establishment, all nations will respond, and go up to worship.

When the law goes forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem, then the peoples will be attracted and eager.

In the reception of that law they will discover the true word of life; and the new order is described in the complementary declaration, "He will teach . . . and we will walk."

The result of such establishment of the house of the Lord, and such going forth of the law from Zion, will be disarmament among the nations, and the consequent age of peace and prosperity. This will be brought about when He judges among nations and arbitrates among peoples. The court of arbitration from which there can be no appeal, and from which men will not desire to appeal because of its absolute justice, will be that of the government of God. When that day dawns men will not destroy their weapons of war, but will convert them into the implements of peace and prosperity. Swords will become plowshares, and spears pruninghooks.

2. *The prevalent Corruption and Judgment*

In the light of that radiant revelation the prophet proceeded to deal with the

conditions in the midst of which he lived, which were those of prevalent corruption and judgment. He first delivered a message in which the light of the vision flashed upon the darkness and revealed it; and then declared and explained the process of judgment.

a. Light upon the Darkness

The first word is that of appeal. The prophet called upon the house of Jacob to walk in the light of the Lord; that is, to see things as they are in the light of the ideal which had been revealed in the vision of the latter days.

The prevailing darkness is next described. It is that first of the contamination of the chosen people by the surrounding and corrupt peoples. They are "filled with customs from the east," have given themselves over to soothsaying; and strike hands, that is enter into partnership and fellowship with the strangers. The second note is that of their material wealth. They have abundance of silver and gold, of horses

and chariots. The third note is that of their idolatry. Friendship with the surrounding peoples has produced material prosperity and the degradation of their religion. This finally has issued in the degradation of the people. Both high and low are degraded.

It is to be observed that this paragraph opens and closes with a note of hopelessness. The prophet declared at the commencement that God had forsaken His people, and at the close cries out "Therefore forgive them not." Such a note seems to contrast strangely with the optimism of the visions of the latter days at the beginning and the end of the section. This note of hopelessness however is the only one possible when man in his rebellion is the object of contemplation; and it opens the way for the stern denunciation which immediately follows.

The light of the ultimate day falling upon the prevalent corruption compels the prophet to call men to enter into the rock and hide in the dust from the terror of the

Lord, and from the glory of His majesty. Before the order seen in the vision can be established, there must be the preliminary operation of judgment in which man must be brought low in order that Jehovah may be alone exalted.

This operation the prophet described first in its breaking down of the pride and haughtiness of man. All the things of height, and those in which man puts his confidence and makes his boast must be broken down in a process of judgment. First the things of nature, cedars of Lebanon, oaks of Bashan, high mountains, and hills that are lifted up; secondly all human work, lofty towers, fenced walls, ships of Tarshish, pleasant imagery; and finally man himself.

In the activity of Jehovah in judgment when He arises to shake mightily, the idols will be destroyed.

The final word of this contemplation of prevalent conditions in the light of the vision of the latter days is an appeal to cease from man. From this point every-

thing is of Jehovah; first the process of His judgment, and presently the restoration in the second vision of the latter days.

β. The Judgment of a corrupt Society

Having seen the necessity for judgment by contemplation of the corruption of the people in the light of the vision of the latter days, the prophet now dealt with that judgment in greater detail. Having ceased from man he proceeded to observe the activity of Jehovah.

That activity is in the first place that of judgment against the rulers. Jehovah destroys true government. Every form of authority is taken away, the men of war, men of law, men of instruction, men of power of every kind.

The result of the destruction of men of true ability in the affairs of government is the substitution of incompetent rulers. Children are to be princes and babes are to have rule over them.

The result of this is social chaos. The

people are oppressed by one another. Those who ought to occupy the place of subservience will arrogate to themselves the place of power. Men will seek to appoint rulers upon the basis of their ability to provide for material needs, while others in their selfishness will refuse to undertake the responsibilities of government. It is a graphic picture of a State without competent government, under the dominion of incompetent rulers, with the necessary result of prevailing disorder.

The prophet then declared the reason for this judgment. So far as the people were concerned it was the result of their own sin. In speech and in act they had been against Jehovah. He declared that their sin was manifest even upon their faces, a searching word in its appalling revelation of the corruption of the people.

The prophet broke out into a cry of anguish as he looked upon the people under their evil rulers, children oppressing them, and women ruling over them.

The reason of the judgment so far as

Jehovah is concerned is that in His heart He has the cause of the people, and He is against all oppression. The rulers spoil the poor, crush the people, grind the face of the poor. Therefore Jehovah stands up to plead against them.

In all human history there has been the closest connection between corrupt rulers and frivolous and polluted womanhood. Fierce was the prophet's denunciation of such. He described them as haughty, and as wanton, and then proceeded to declare what the judgment of Jehovah will be against them. Their wantonness and their luxury are to be ended. They will be visited by physical affliction, and by the sweeping out of all the things associated with their corrupt and luxurious life; and finally by the death and consequent dearth of men. The gates of Zion will lament and mourn, and the affliction will fall as it ever does, with heaviest stroke upon the women whose frivolity and wantonness have so largely contributed to the corruption of the people.

3. *The Vision of the latter Days*

"In that day," began the prophet, and the connection must not be lost sight of. It is in the day of judgment. At the commencement of his word of appeal he saw the latter days in all their glory. Since then he had been gazing upon the corruption and denouncing it; observing the judgment, and agreeing to its righteousness. Having thus seen the necessity for judgment, he also recognised that out of it will come the deliverance. This second vision of the latter days is in some senses different from the earlier one. Here it is rather the vision of the remnant left as the result of the processes of judgment. It is a vision of those "that are escaped of Israel," that is, those "left in Zion," "he that remaineth in Jerusalem." It is a vision of the conditions which will obtain when the Lord has washed away the filth and has purged the blood of Jerusalem.

The description is of a threefold blessedness. There is first that of material pros-

perity; secondly that of a moral purity,—the remnant is to be holy when there has been the washing away of the filth and the blood of corruption; finally there is to be mighty protection as Jehovah again manifests His care for the people in the cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of the flaming fire by night.

From the height of the clear vision of the ultimate order the prophet had passed to the vision of corruption and of judgment, and he ended with a picture of the first result of judgment in the deliverance and establishment of a remnant of the people.

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c. THE DENUNCIATION

With the thought of judgment, and the necessity for it still in mind, the prophet uttered his great denunciation, which falls into three parts. The first contains the song of accusation; the second the woes of application; while the third describes the instrument of judgment.

1. *The Song of Accusation*

The song of accusation consists of a simple and familiar illustration of the rights of a proprietor in his vineyard, by which the prophet made his appeal to the people. The nature of the parable is such as to compel assent to the rectitude of the judgment indicated.

Having announced his intention to sing a song of the beloved concerning his vineyard, he proceeded so to do. The burden of the song is that of the rights of Jehovah. The fundamental right is that of absolute proprietorship. The vineyard is His property, and so also is the vine planted within

it. This in itself is sufficient to warrant Him in any action which it may please Him to take in regard to the vine and to the vineyard.

That fundamental right is strengthened by the fact of His care for the vineyard in the interest of the vine. He had cultivated it, gathering out the stones, and thus creating the best conditions for the flourishing and fruitfulness of His vine.

His ultimate right was therefore that ot the expectation of fruit. He looked that it should bring forth grapes.

Nothing can be more full of convincing appeal than the simplicity of this statement. The owner of a vineyard places within it his own vine, having exercised toil in the preparation of the soil, and in careful cultivation thereof; all this necessarily and naturally with a view to the production of the fruit natural to the vine, that namely of grapes.

In one blunt and swift sentence the prophet declared the fact of the failure of the vine, "it brought forth wild grapes."

The story of the song ceases as in the midst of it the prophet made his appeal to the people. That appeal was twofold. It first inquired whether anything more could have been done to the vineyard. The inquiry was in the nature of a challenge, to which it is evident the prophet expected no answer other than that of agreement that everything had been done that could be done. Therefore he at once asked the reason of the failure.

No answer was given, and consequently the song proceeded to tell the story of judgment, and thus to reveal the final right of Jehovah. The vineyard is to be destroyed, and the vine also. The fertilising rain is to be withheld.

The nature of the parable is such that those who listen must admit that in the matter of the vineyard and the vine the final right of judgment must be conceded, being based upon the first three dealt with. The right of proprietorship, strengthened by the care exercised, creates the right of the expectation of fruit. That fruit

failing, the right to destroy is unquestionable.

The prophet immediately made a blunt application of his song as he declared "the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant: and He looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry."

2. *The Woes of Application*

Having thus virtually compelled the conscience of the people to find a verdict against themselves, the prophet immediately proceeded to utter woes of application against the prevailing sins of the time. The first is against monopoly and the consequent oppression of the poor; the second is against the life of dissipation which the rulers were living; the third is against that unbelief which persists in iniquity, and scoffs at the idea of Divine intervention; the fourth is against that moral confusion which is unable to distinguish between good and evil; the fifth

is against the false wisdom which acts without reference to God; and the sixth is against the perversion of justice by the judges.

α. Against Monopoly

In a few words the prophet gave a graphic picture of the condition of the people resulting from the greed and selfishness of the monopolists, who secure for themselves houses and land until there is no place for the people to dwell.

Jehovah whispers in the ear of His servant the story of His judgment determined against monopoly. The houses, "great and fair," shall be desolate; and the land barren and fruitless.

β. Against Dissipation

The second woe is against the prevailing dissipation of those who are giving themselves over to drunkenness to the accompaniment of music, and in utter blindness to the activities of Jehovah.

The result of such dissipation is the

ruin of the people, who pass into captivity and want, and are swept into the grave in multitudes ; the low and high alike sharing in the humiliation.

Upon such the judgment of Jehovah is inevitable, because He is sanctified in righteousness. The city becomes desolate, a place amid the ruins of which the flocks of wandering shepherds will graze.

γ. Against Unbelief

The third woe is against unbelief, the prophet dealing first with its manifestation, that of persistent sin, suggested under the figure of drawing iniquity with cords of vanity, and sinning with a cart-rope. The inspiration of this attitude of determined sin is that of unbelief in God, especially in what the prophet has declared concerning His determined activity. It should not be forgotten that the prophetic description of determined sin includes the suggestion of judgment. To draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and to sin with a cart-rope is to become enslaved thereby. This is the

underlying thought also in the words of Solomon,

"His own iniquities shall take the wicked,
And he shall be holden with the cords of his sin."—Prov. v. 22.

δ. *Against moral Confusion*

The fourth woe is against that moral confusion which is the inevitable issue of unbelief. The true centre of life is God, and when men lose their confidence in Him, confusion must as inevitably issue as it does in individual life when the nerve is severed from the brain-centre. This confusion the prophet first described in its fundamental conception, men calling evil good, and good evil; and then in the resulting conduct, the darkness is put for light, and light for darkness; the bitter is put for sweet, and sweet for bitter.

ε. *Against Conceit*

The fifth woe is against that fatuous conceit which is the inevitable issue of the

moral confusion which arises from unbelief in God. Men become wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight; whereas they are foolish and imprudent. The reference here is principally to the rulers, and thus prepares the way for the final woe.

ζ. *Against Perversion of Justice*

The sixth woe is against the perversion of justice. The prophet first described the drunken rulers. So far were they abandoned to drink that he described them as "mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink."

The result was a drunken administration, corrupted by bribery and violation of the principles of righteousness.

The judgment upon such is to be that of devouring fire, destroying root and blossom, because they have rejected the law of the Lord of hosts.

The conditions upon which these woes are pronounced, constitute a description of that

condition referred to at the close of the song which constituted the reason of the Divine complaint. Jehovah looked for judgment, but He found oppression; He looked for righteousness, but behold a cry. The whole movement reveals a sequence which it is well to ponder. Selfishness is the first manifestation. Selfishness means the dethronement of God. The result is that of turning for satisfaction to the false stimulus of wine. The vindication of such action is that of cynical unbelief. Its issue is moral confusion. Its result, so far as the rulers are concerned, is pride; and so far as the people are concerned, it is the perversion of justice.

3. *The Instrument of Judgment*

The prophet immediately turned to the definite announcement of judgment. He first described the anger of Jehovah. Its reason is indicated by the preliminary word "therefore," which shows that all the conditions which have been revealed in the

preceding pronunciation of woes, constitute the cause of the Divine anger. That anger has already been manifested in the judgments which have fallen upon them, and moreover, it is not yet turned away, and that because the sins abound.

He then described the coming of the scourge. There can be no doubt that the Assyrians are referred to. The hosts are seen approaching, in response to an ensign lifted by Jehovah, and to His call for them. They advance swiftly, and without weariness, or any signs of weakness. They are perfectly equipped, with sharpened arrows, and bows ready bent, and horses' hoofs like flint, and wheels on their chariots like a whirlwind.

They are terribly fierce, sweeping like lions upon the prey, and carrying them off, while none is found to deliver. The onslaught is described by the prophet as being overwhelmingly successful; sweeping like the sea, so that the land is filled with darkness and distress, a land darkened by the clouds of judgment.

Thus end the prophetic messages in the days of Uzziah, which were the days of great material prosperity, in which the people had wandered far from God, and were under the dominion of unjust and oppressive rulers.

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This brief section deals with events in the reigns of Jotham and Ahaz. It falls into two parts; the first giving the story of the prophet's new vision at the death of Uzziah; and the second an account of the transaction with Ahaz, which, for the time being, ended his public ministry.

a. the prophet's new vision

When Uzziah died, Isaiah was called to the exercise of a new ministry, and in this section we have the account of his special preparation for that work. It consisted of a vision granted to him; and a voice commissioning him.

1. *The Vision*

The vision granted was that of the supreme Lord as the word Adonahy, suggested. The one vision was that of a twofold fact concerning the nature of God, that namely of His glory and His grace.

a. The Glory

The whole life of the prophet had been lived in the reign of Uzziah. From childhood his thought of the throne of his people had been of the throne occupied by this man. As the prophecies during his reign show, the prophet was perfectly familiar with the corruption of the people. The fact that in the course of them there is no reference to Uzziah, after the opening verse which dated the prophet's ministry, suggests his familiarity with the fact of the excellent character of Uzziah during the early days of his reign; and of the further fact that for many years on account of his leprosy he had not been responsible for government. When he died there would naturally come to this man a sense of the impending national trouble consequent upon the condition of the people, and the fact that the throne was for the moment vacant; and that Jotham, a man of personal goodness, but without governing influence, was about to succeed. (See 2 Chronicles xxvii. 1, 2.)

At that time there was granted to Isaiah a vision of the glory of the Lord. The first impression made upon him was that of the fact of the supremacy of God. This is indicated by his use of the word Adonahy, and by the declaration that he saw Him seated upon a throne. Thus in the hour when the sceptre fell from the hand of the only earthly king Isaiah had known, and the throne of earth was empty, he saw the living One, from Whose hand the sceptre never falls, occupying the throne which is never vacant. This fundamental phase of the vision was calculated to fill him with courage, born of the assurance that however corrupt the government of earth had become, everything was still under the authority of God.

As he gazed upon this vision he saw the seraphim, and heard their song. They stood above, or over, or around the Lord, in the attitude of service. Their attitude suggests reverence and activity, as it is said of each of them that "with twain he covered his face," that he might not see;

and "with twain he covered his feet," that he might not be seen; and "with twain he did fly," in the action of ceaseless service. The song of the seraphim was the result of their vision, and its first note is the threefold affirmation of the holiness of Jehovah, while its second is the declaration that His glory consists in the fulness of the whole earth. To them, notwithstanding the failure and the corruption of human affairs, the Divine purpose is the supreme matter; and the form of their song suggests their assurance of its ultimate realisation, an assurance based upon their consciousness of the character of Jehovah.

The final consciousness of the prophet in the presence of the vision was that of the shaking of the foundations of the thresholds, and the filling of the house with smoke, signifying the transitory character of the material, and the infinite mystery and distance of the Being of Jehovah, the sovereign Lord.

β. The Grace

There immediately followed a revelation of grace which is as remarkable as that of the glory. In the presence of the unveiled glory of Jehovah, the prophet uttered the cry of his own need. Made conscious of the holiness of Jehovah, he became conscious of his own sinfulness, and of the sinfulness of the people in the midst of whom he dwelt.

This cry was immediately answered as one of the seraphim, acting unquestionably under the direction of the King, Whose servant he was, flew to the prophet, bearing with him a live coal, the cleansing fire, taken from the altar; and touching the lips of the suppliant, declared that by that touch of fire his iniquity was taken away, and his sin was purged.

The grace of the King is revealed in the swiftness of the flight of the seraphim. The sigh of the man conscious of his sin reached the ears of the King, and the song of the adoring seraph ceased, that the sigh of

the suppliant sinner might be answered. The figure is that of the Hebrew temple, but the fact is larger than the figure. The temple seen is the true dwelling-place of the King, in which is the throne high and lifted up. The fact that in that temple there is an altar, interpreted by the symbolism of the Hebrew worship, reveals the abiding principle of sacrifice, whereby Jehovah is able to extend the pardon of grace to sinning men. The nature of that pardon is profound. The iniquity or crookedness of outward action is taken away; because the sin or the condition from which it springs, is expiated. Carefully considered, it will be found that no more wonderful unveiling of the grace of God occurs in the Scriptures of the old economy.

2. *The Voice*

Immediately following the vision, the prophet heard the voice of the sovereign Lord, Adonahy. The message was that

first of a commission, and secondly of an answer to an inquiry by the prophet.

a. The Commission

The voice inquires, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" The inquiry expresses the King's need of a messenger, and reveals two important facts as to the qualification of that messenger. He must be one sent by the King, and willing to go for Him.

The prophet immediately replied, "Here am I, send me," thus exactly replying to the twofold thought of the inquiry, but in the reverse order. The last part of the Divine inquiry was, "Who will go?" The prophet began there as he said, "Here am I." He thus indicated his willingness. The first part of the inquiry had been, "Whom shall I send?" and the prophet replied, "Send me," thus yielding his allegiance to the King.

Immediately the voice gave him his charge, and that charge indicated the fact

that his mission would be a failure so far as human measurements or appearances go. Indeed, because of the condition of the people, that of hearing continually without understanding, and seeing continually without perceiving, the effect of the ministry upon them would be that of increasing their spiritual dulness. The subsequent study of the book will show how this consciousness remained with the prophet, as ever and anon he described them as those having eyes, but no vision; having ears, but no hearing; until finally the consciousness expressed itself in the language of the ideal Servant of God, "Who hath believed our report?"

β. The Inquiry

The sense of awe which such a charge produced, is manifested in the question which the prophet asked, "Adonahy, how long?" That question was immediately answered, and while the answer is a revelation of the awful judgment about to

fall, it nevertheless indicates a limit to the process of judgment, and ends with a promise suggestive of ultimate deliverance and restoration. The cities are to be laid waste without inhabitant, the houses without man; the land is to become utterly waste; Jehovah will have removed men far away, and the forsaken places will be many in the midst of the land. This prophetic ministry of judgment is to continue until that time.

The desolation is not to be final. There will be a tenth, but even that will be eaten up; but the destruction of the tenth is to be like that of the terebinth or the oak, whose stock, or substance, or life principle, remains, even when the oak is felled. Thus the processes of destruction will not end in the annihilation of the people, for the holy seed is the life substance of the nation, and that will not be destroyed. This is the recognition of the determination of Jehovah to accomplish His purpose of peace, even through judgment, and recognises the Messianic potentiality of the

people of God. This is the first Messianic value of the prophecy. It is the hint of a holy seed. Gradually, as we proceed, we shall see how this develops, until the perfected and ideal Servant of God is presented, through Whom the whole nation will ultimately be restored to the fulfilment of original purpose.

b. THE PROPHET AND AHAZ

Immediately following this new call of the prophet we have the account of his encounter with Ahaz. We may suppose that the reign of Jotham, and the earlier part of the reign of Ahaz were occupied with the exercise of a general ministry in accordance with the charge delivered to him. In this section we have the account of the prophet's parting company with Ahaz, and ending for a period his public ministry. It falls into four parts; the first describing the historic occasion; the second containing the comfort to Ahaz; the third telling the story of the sign; while the fourth pronounces the judgment.

1. *The historic Occasion*

Rezin, the king of Syria, and Pekah, the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, had entered into a confederacy against Judah. Their first attack was unsuccessful. We learn from the book of Kings that the city was blockaded, and that they were unable to come to close quarters. A crisis in the campaign was reached when the house of David, that is, the reigning house, Ahaz, learned that "Syria is confederate with Ephraim," or as the margin has it, "Syria resteth upon Ephraim," that is, the hosts of Syria had taken up their position in the territory of Ephraim. Whereas we cannot quite understand the geographical significance of the statement, it is evident that Ahaz considered that they had gained some tactical advantage, and that therefore Jerusalem was in peril. The consequence was that his heart was filled with fear, as was also the heart of his people.

2. *The Comfort and Condition*

It was at this juncture that Jehovah commanded Isaiah to meet the king, taking with him his son Shear-jashub. The significance of the going of these two must not be passed over here, as it constitutes a key to the interpretation of much that is to follow. The meaning of the name of the prophet Isaiah is, the salvation of Jehovah; while that of his son, Shear-jashub is, a remnant shall return. Thus the prophet and his son stood before Ahaz, and Isaiah declared that the counsel of these kings should not prevail against him, if he, that is Ahaz, would take heed and be quiet. He was charged neither to fear nor to let his heart be faint on account of this confederacy. The confederacy was known to Jehovah, and He affirmed that the power of Syria and Ephraim should be broken in pieces.

The condition upon which Ahaz was to be established was that he would believe.

3. *The Sign*

Speaking through the prophet, Jehovah then offered Ahaz a sign, either in the depth or in the height. Ahaz refused, saying, "I will not ask, neither will I tempt Jehovah." This refusal was an act of unbelief, notwithstanding the fact that it had the sound of religious loyalty.

The prophet rebuked Ahaz for this refusal, and then immediately declared that whereas Ahaz declined to seek a sign, even though Jehovah had bade him do so, a sign should be given. The sign would be that a virgin should conceive, and bear a son, whose name should be called Immanuel. Before that child should grow to years of discretion, the two powers which Ahaz feared, would be forsaken. This sign had an immediate significance, being a development of the word spoken in the charge to the prophet, that even the tenth remaining should be destroyed; but that the holy seed would still be found. That first Messianic reference to the holy seed now becomes a

Messianic reference to the birth of a child. A comparison of this word of the prophet with the declaration of his contemporary, Micah, that out of Bethlehem Ephrathah there should come forth a "ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting; and that Jehovah would "give them up" until "she which travaileth" should bring forth, will emphasise the true Messianic value of the word; and finally Matthew's direct quotation of the prophecy of Isaiah,

"Behold, the virgin shall be with child,
and shall bring forth a son,
And they shall call His name Immanuel,"

sets the seal of New Testament authority upon the fact.

4. *The Judgment*

Isaiah ended his message to Ahaz by announcing and describing the judgment which would fall upon Judah in connection with the Assyrian invasion. The announcement is made in terms which are perfectly

clear that judgment shall fall by the coming of the king of Assyria.

Then in graphic and poetic language the Assyrian invasion is described. Jehovah will call for the fly of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee in the land of Assyria. They will come in answer to His call, and settle upon the land. The king of Assyria will be in the hand of Jehovah as a razor with which He will remove the strength and dignity of the people.

The results of the invasion will be that the land being devastated, the people will be reduced to the habits of the life of the desert, in which butter and honey will form the staple diet.

Instead of the vines there will be briers and thorns. All will be so wildly overgrown that hunters will come there with arrows and with bow.

This is the judgment determined upon Judah, and here it is well to remember the sign. All this shall happen before the child born shall have come to years of knowledge, as between good and evil.

II. SECOND CIRCLE. PRIVATE MINISTRY. viii.-xxvii.

. THE SIGNS OF THE PROPHET AND HIS CHILDREN. viii.-xii.

a. PRELIMINARY. viii.-ix. 7

1. *Jehovah's Charge to the Prophet.* viii. 1-18

a. *The preliminary Instructions.* 1-4
The Tablet. 1
The Children. 2-4
Spiritual. 2
Natural. 3, 4

β. *The Explanation.* 5-15
The Doom. 5-8
The Waters of Shiloah refused. 5, 6
The River chosen. 7, 8
The Hope. 9-15
The Challenge of Faith. 9, 10
The Secret of Faith. 11-15
The false Fear. 11, 12
The true Fear. 13-15

γ. *The final Command.* 16-18
Two Words. "Bind." "Seal." 16
Patience. 17
The Sign. 18
Isaiah. Salvation of Jehovah.
Shear-jashub. A remnant shall return.
Maher-shalal-hash-baz. Speed the spoil.
Hasten the prey.

2. *The Prophet's Charge to the Children.* viii. 19-ix. 7

a. *Warning.* viii. 19-22
The false Way. 19, 20
The Result. 21, 22

β. *Hope.* ix. 1-7
The Light. 1-3
The Process. 4, 5
The Person. 6, 7
His Nature. 6a
His Power. 6b
His Name. 6c
His Programme. 7

II. SECOND CIRCLE. PRIVATE MINISTRY

After the meeting with Ahaz; Isaiah, acting under definite Divine instruction, turned from public ministry, and devoted himself to an inner circle of loyal souls. This ministry lasted through the closing part of the reign of Ahaz, and continued for some considerable period during that of Hezekiah. There are no evidences of return to public ministry until the period of political intrigue in the days of Hezekiah, when an attempt was being made to arrange a secret treaty with Egypt as against Assyria.

The private ministry consists of instructions concerning the signs of the prophet and his children; the burdens of the nations; and the vision of the day of the Lord. It thus begins with the small circle of loyal souls, and then deals with the people of God; proceeding through the subject of surrounding nations, to its final consideration of the accomplishment of the purposes of God in the whole world.

i. The Signs of the Prophet and his Children

The first part of the prophet's ministry to the remnant consists of his instruction of them as to their place and value in the economy of Jehovah. It consists of three sections; the first is preliminary, and deals with the fact of the signs; the second is a detailed interpretation of the signs; the third being a brief final word of confidence resulting from faith.

a. preliminary

In this section we have the account of how Isaiah turned from his more public ministry to devote himself to a small circle of believing souls, as it sets forth Jehovah's charge to the prophet, and the prophet's charge to the children.

1. *Jehovah's Charge to the Prophet*

This charge consists of the preliminary instructions, the explanation, and the final command.

a. The Preliminary Instructions

After the meeting with Ahaz, Jehovah commanded the prophet to write upon a great tablet the ominous and compound word Maher-shalal-hash-baz, which means, the spoil speedeth, the prey hasteth. The writing on this tablet would seem to be the last act of his public ministry. In fulfilment of the declaration made to him when he was commissioned after his vision of the enthroned King, his messages had been refused. The people had heard, but had not understood ; had seen, but had not perceived. His final word therefore was one which foretold the coming of judgment.

He was further instructed that Jehovah would take to Him faithful witnesses. Two only are named, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah. These represented the spiritual children, that is, those people loyal to Jehovah, who constituted the remnant. At this time there was born to the prophet a son, and obeying the Divine command he called him Maher-

shalal-hash-baz. Thus the birth of this child constituted the first and local fulfilment of the sign given by Ahaz, that a child should be born, and that before he should come to years of discretion, the king of Assyria would act as the scourge of Jehovah.

β. The Explanation

A second message of Jehovah to the prophet afforded an explanation of the Divine method of judgment. It is evident that here in the ministry to the inner circle, the prophet's outlook was not upon Judah only, neither was it confined to Israel as the northern nation. It was rather inclusive of the whole nation according to the Divine intention. The people had refused the gentle method of the persuasion of Jehovah, and therefore they were to be dealt with by the overwhelming method of judgment. They had rejoiced in Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel (see vii. 1). The reference there was to the northern kingdom of Israel,

which in confederacy with Syria was at war with Judah. The waters of the river of the Assyrian host would be brought upon them, and that same Assyrian power would sweep onward into Judah; but the prophet was careful to declare that he would pass through. Even though the waters reached to the neck, Judah would not be submerged. The final word revealed how the Assyrian invasion would affect the whole of the people. "The stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel."

In response to this message of Jehovah the prophet broke out into the language of hope. This was first a challenge of faith as he defied the uproar of the peoples who were taking counsel together against the purposes of God, declaring that such conspiracy could not be successful, for, said he, "God is with us." The relation of this part of his answer to that which has preceded is seen in the fact that the declaration that the stretching out of the wings of Assyria would cover the land, described it as the

land, not of the people, but of Immanuel. That word signifying "God is with us," inspired the confidence which challenged the assembling people to do their worst.

The prophet then proceeded to declare the secret of his faith. Jehovah had spoken to him that he should not be filled with that false fear of the conspiracy which characterised the attitude of the people, but rather that he should fear the Lord of hosts.

Jehovah is the only fear of faithful souls, because He is sanctuary in the midst of turmoil. This presence of Jehovah constituted the principle of sifting between the people who were of the nation of Israel. While He was sanctuary to the faithful, He was a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel.

It was in order to the fulfilment of this method that the public ministry of Isaiah ceased for a while, and he was called to devote himself to the instruction of the remnant.

γ. *The Final Command*

The final and inclusive command of Jehovah to the prophet was that he should bind up the testimony, and seal the teaching among the disciples. This word was answered by the prophet in a declaration of obedience and patience, "I will wait for Jehovah, that hideth His face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for Him."

Then the whole principle of the method was revealed by the prophet in a word which shows that he understood the particular ministry to which he was now called. "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion."

In order to an understanding of this it is necessary that we should here note that which is the key to future consideration, that the very names of the prophet and his children are significant; Isaiah signifying salvation of Jehovah; Shear-jashub, a remnant shall return; and Maher-shalal-

hash-baz, the spoil speedeth, the prey hasteth. Thus the name of the prophet indicated the ultimate purpose of Jehovah; the name of the son with whom he confronted Ahaz indicated the method of the remnant; while the name of the new born, Maher-shalal-hash-baz, indicated the immediate method of judgment.

2. *The Prophet's Charge to the Children*

Having thus dealt with that charge of Jehovah which constituted the reason, and explained the method of the private ministry, the prophet uttered his first charge to this inner circle of his children, and it falls into two parts; the first being of the nature of warning; and the second a proclamation for the creation of hope.

a. *Warning*

The prophet warned these people against turning in the midst of the prevailing difficulty, to those that had familiar spirits, and to wizards; referring to such, with evident

disdain, as those who chirp and mutter. The test of revelation is that of the teaching and testimony derived directly from God. To return to any other professed revelation from the unseen world will result in darkness. There will be no morning for those who do so, but rather distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish, and the driving away into thick darkness.

β. Hope

In immediate continuation, but in remarkable contrast, the prophet declared the experience of the loyal, and described the morning that would dawn for them, and the light into which they would come. He saw the passing of the gloom. Even Zebulun and Naphtali brought into contempt, would be made glorious. The people who walked in darkness are seen irradiated by the shining of a great light. The nation is multiplied, and filled with joy.

This will be brought about by the destruction of all opposing forces; and the things of war, the armour of the armed

man, the garments rolled in blood, will be devoted to destruction by fire.

All this great deliverance will result from the advent of a Person. Here the thought of the stock remaining in the stem, of the child born in circumstances of desolation, is developed. These local facts served as illustrations in the prophet's hour of exalted vision, and he dealt with the fulfilment of the thought in the economy of God. Deliverance will come with the coming of the Deliverer.

He described His nature. He is a child, and a son, but the terms so far from being synonymous, mark two distinct facts. The child is born unto us, coming thus into actual relationship with the human; but the son is given, and the word suggests at once the fact of His relation to God, which is fully revealed in the fulness of the times.

His power is graphically suggested in the declaration that the government shall be upon His shoulder.

His name is an expansion or elaboration of Immanuel, as it sets forth all the truth

concerning God revealed in the process of human history. He is to be called the "Wonderful Counsellor," which suggests that spirit of wisdom and understanding which is the first manifestation of Deity granted to men through Nature and by creation (see Prov. viii.). He is to be called the "God-hero," which suggests that counsel and might whereby He enters into conflict with all the forces which oppose His purpose, and overcomes them. He is to be called "the Father of eternity," which suggests that perfect and final knowledge which constitutes the resting-place of all such as put their trust in Him. He is to be called "the Prince of peace," because through Him the principle of the fear of the Lord which produces purity, will be made operative, and the Kingdom of peace will thereby be established.

His programme is to be that of progress toward the ultimate establishment of the Kingdom and of peace. The use of the word "increase" here is in recognition of much that is suggested by the great four-

fold name dealt with. Government is to be upon His shoulder. That government is to increase to the ultimate of peace. The method is that of a process suggested by the name. God was first known as "the Wonderful Counsellor," then as "the God-hero," then as "the Father of eternity"; and He will finally be known as "the Prince of peace." All these facts, and the forces which they connote, are resident within the child born, the son given, of whom in the fulness of times, one wrote, "It pleased the Father that in Him should all the fulness dwell." The last word of the message of hope to the little circle of loyal souls is the prophet's affirmation, "The zeal of Jehovah of hosts shall perform this."

THE INTERPRETATION OF THE SIGNS. ix. 8-xii. 4

I. *Maher-shalal-hash-baz.* ix. 8-x. 4

JUDGMENT ON ISRAEL.

α. *The first Strophe.* ix. 8-12
Pride 8-10
Adversaries. 11, 12a
"For all this." 12b

β. *The second Strophe.* ix. 13-17
Stubbornness. 13
Destruction of Leaders. 14-17a
"For all this." 17b

γ. *The third Strophe.* ix. 18-21
Prevalent Wickedness. 18
Civil Strife. 19-21a
"For all this." 21b

δ. *The fourth Strophe.* x. 1-4
Corruption of Judges. 1, 2
Desolation. 3, 4a
"For all this." 4b

b. THE INTERPRETATION OF THE SIGNS

The prophet returned to the declaration, "Behold I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders," and proceeded to the interpretation of the signs of himself and his children; proceeding from that which was immediate to that which is ultimate.

The first was Maher-shalal-hash-baz, the sign of imminent judgment. This is followed by a parenthesis, in which he foretold the judgment of Assyria. The second was that of Shear-jashub, the sign of salvation through the remnant. The last was that of Isaiah, the sign of salvation by Jehovah.

1. *Maher-shalal-hash-baz*

The sign of the son, given to Judah, is here used in its application to Israel as the northern kingdom. It falls into four strophes, each of which ends with the refrain, "For all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still," which refrain is first found in the denuncia-

tion with which the prophetic ministry closed in the reign of Uzziah, and in connection with the first reference to the coming of Assyria (see v. 25). It signifies the continuity of judgment resulting from continuity of disobedience.

a. The first Strophe

The first strophe rebukes the pride which expresses itself in rebellion, a rebellion which is all the more sinful seeing that it is a daring defiance of previous judgment. "The bricks are fallen, but we will build with hewn stones; the sycamores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars."

Because of that rebellion Jehovah will bring against him, that is Israel, the adversaries of Rezin. The passage is somewhat obscure, but if the words, "the Syrians on the east, and the Philistines on the west" be treated as a parenthesis of reference to those with whom Israel is contemplating, if not already involved in, confederacy; then the "they" almost im-

mediately following refers to the adversaries stirred up against Rezin, with whom it is certainly true that Pekah was then in confederacy. These, the adversaries of Rezin, that is the Assyrians, will devour Israel.

It is because of this pride that His anger has not been turned away, and His hand is stretched out still; and the scourge of Assyria is approaching.

β. The second Strophe

In the second strophe the prophet announced and denounced Israel's stubbornness of heart. Nothwithstanding all judgment, they have not returned to Jehovah. Therefore it must fall upon all, both high and low; and pre-eminently upon the leaders of the people who have caused them to err. This judgment will be characterised by invincible severity, for the Lord will not have compassion on a people utterly profane.

Because of this stubbornness His anger is not turned away, and His hand is

stretched out still in judgment, as He brings the Assyrian hosts.

γ. *The third Strophe*

The prophet then described the prevalence and fierceness of their wickedness, which has become like a fire burning and devouring and destroying the land. This burning element in wickedness is that of the rule of Jehovah ; and all the internecine strife and bloodshed, the oppression and cruelty which Manasseh is manifesting toward Ephraim, and Ephraim toward Manasseh, and both of them toward Judah, are in themselves the instruments of Divine judgment.

This prevalent wickedness is the reason why His anger is not turned away, and in the coming of Assyria's hosts His hand is stretched out still.

δ. *The fourth Strophe*

In the final strophe the prophet described the corruption of the judges and rulers of the people. Their decrees are unrighteous,

their writings are perverse, they oppress all that are helpless, and their judgment is that they will themselves be overwhelmed and destroyed by the people.

This corruption of the judges and the consequent demoralisation of the people is the reason why His anger is not turned away, and Assyria's hosts are to be the instruments of judgment in the hand that is stretched out still.

Thus through special application to Israel, the prophet teaches this inner circle the meaning of Maher-shalal-hash-baz. It is the sign of swift judgment ; speed the spoil, hasten the prey ; and the reason of the judgment is the persistent sin of the people.

PARENTHESIS. x. 5-19.

JUDGMENT OF ASSYRIA.

1. *A Contrast of Intention.* 5-11

α. *The Divine. A Rod.* 5, 6

β. *The Assyrian. To destroy.* 7-11

2. *The Divine Purpose.* 12-19

α. *The Determination of the Lord.* 12-15

His Work on Jerusalem. 12a

His Purpose for Assyria. 12b-15

To Punish. 12b

The Reason. 13-15

What Assyria said. 13, 14

What Assyria forgot. 15

β. *The Activity of Jehovah.* 16-19

Leanness—by Fire. 16

Devouring—by Fire. 17

Consuming—by Fire. 18

A Remnant of Trees. 19

PARENTHESIS. JUDGMENT OF ASSYRIA.

Having thus interpreted the signs of judgment in their application to Israel, the prophet in a parenthesis spoke to Assyria. Assyria was the power which Jehovah was about to use for the punishment of His people, but because it failed to understand its true relation to Him, it in turn would be judged. The prophet first described the contrast of intention; and then declared the Divine purpose.

1. *A Contrast of Intention*

Jehovah's intention is that the Assyrian shall be a rod in His hand, with which He will chastise His own people. That people is described as a profane nation, the people of His wrath; and because of this, Assyria is to speed the spoil, to take the prey, that is, to fulfil the suggestion of Maher-shalal-hash-baz.

The Assyrian intention is not that of Jehovah. "Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so." The

purpose of the Assyrian is that of the destruction and the cutting off of nations, the people of God being but one among the many. To him Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom ; and Jerusalem, the capital of the southern kingdom, are no more than Calno, Carchemish, Hamath, Arpad, Damascus. Indeed, the graven images of these cities did excel those of Jerusalem and Samaria. Is it not therefore as easy for him to overcome the idols, or nonentities as the word signifies, of these two as of the rest? Assyria is revealed as a force bent on conquest, and as holding in contempt all confidence in religion as a secret of strength.

2. *The Divine Purpose*

The prophet then declared the Divine purpose, dealing with the determination of the Lord and the activity of Jehovah.

α. *The Determination of the Lord*

His determination is to accomplish His work on Jerusalem, that is, to use Assyria

so far as He sees fit, as the rod for the punishment of His people; but it is also His purpose to punish the king of Assyria.

The reason for this determination concerning Assyria is to be discovered in what Assyria said, and in what Assyria forgot.

Assyria declared that its victories were gained by its own strength, and its own prudence; affirmed that by these things it had been able to change the boundary lines of nations, and to plunder the people of their wealth, so that none had been found who attempted to move a wing, or open the mouth, or chirp.

What Assyria forgot or failed to realise was that it was but as an axe, a saw, a rod, a staff in the hand of Another; that it was but an instrument of Jehovah.

The choice of the figures for the instrument is one in harmony with the constant figure of the cutting down of the trees, notwithstanding which, a stock is to be left. Thus as the prophet was instructing the remnant, there would come to them a

recognition of many applications of the principle of his teaching.

β. The Activity of Jehovah

The activity of Jehovah against Assyria is then graphically described as leanness, produced by a burning like the burning of fire; as a devouring, produced by a fire and a flame which is that of the light of Israel and the Holy One of Israel; as a consuming, which produces fainting. Even of Assyria there shall be left a remnant of the trees of his forest, but only a remnant.

This description of the Divine activity suggests that strange and mystic calamity which overtook the hosts, which is chronicled in the historic section of the book (xxxvii. 36-38).

2. *Shear-jashub.* x. 20-34

THE REMNANT.

α. *The Issue foretold.* 20 23
Stay on Jehovah. 20
Only a Remnant. 21-23
Unto the mighty God. 21
After a Consumption. 22
For a Consummation. 23

β. *The consequent Message.* 24-27
"Be not afraid." 24, 25
The Scourge scourged. 26
The consequent Deliverance. 27

γ. *The Process of Judgment.* 28-34
The Assyrians' Approach. 28-32
The Judgment on Israel. 33, 34
The Felling of the Forest.
(Comp. vi. 13 and xiv. 8.)

2. *Shear-jashub*

The sign of the son who accompanied Isaiah on his embassy to Ahaz is here interpreted in its revelation of the method of God in the preservation of the remnant. The prophet first foretold the issue of the preservation of the remnant; then delivered a message of comfort to the remnant; and finally described the process of judgment.

a. *The Issue foretold*

In that day, that is, the day of the judgment of Israel,—the connection here being with the interpretation of Maher-shalal-hash-baz,—the remnant of Israel will have learned the lesson of dependence upon Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel.

The declaration that only a remnant will return is opened by the use of the name Shear-jashub, which our translators have in this case translated, "a remnant shall return." The declaration would be more forceful if it were left in this blunt form,

"Shear-jashub, the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God." That is the great principle. It will only be a remnant; and that after a consumption, the consumption of judgment; but that also in order to a consummation, the consummation of the purpose of Jehovah in the midst of the earth. Thus the issue of this faithful remnant is that it will constitute an instrument of Jehovah for the carrying forward of His purposes through consumption to consummation, that is, through judgment to peace.

β. The consequent Message

Having thus foretold the issue and revealed the value of the remnant, the prophet spoke directly to Uzziah, Zechariah, and the rest of the loyal souls gathered about him, his message of comfort. Dwelling in the midst of Zion with the hosts of Assyria approaching, they were charged not to be afraid, for in "a very little while" the indignation would be accomplished; and also the anger of Jehovah in the destruction of Assyria.

The prophet then described that destruction. The scourge would be scourged, with the result that the burden of Assyria would depart from the shoulder of the people of God, and its yoke from their neck. This declaration of deliverance ends with a very remarkable word, "The yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing." The difficulty of the statement is recognised, and various interpretations have been suggested. Dr. Skinner says, "This has usually been interpreted to mean that the animal (Judah) will 'wax fat and kick' (Deut. xxxii. 15), and break its yoke; or that its increasing fatness will burst the yoke of its neck (a very odd comparison!)." We do not wonder that he adds, "Neither of these senses is at all tolerable." We should be inclined to describe them as non-senses, because such interpretation is entirely out of harmony with the whole teaching that the yoke is broken in order that Judah may prosper, not as the result of her prosperity. May there not here be a recognition of that initial purpose of God, that

cannot be frustrated, His anointing of His people to the fulfilment of a mission ?

γ. *The Process of Judgment*

In view of the issue which he had foretold, and the consciousness of safety, which in accord with his message must be the consciousness of the remnant, the prophet then in graphic language described the judgment on Israel to be brought about by Assyria. The approach of the army of Assyria is imaginatively watched as it sweeps by the way of the passes, and through the valleys on its march from Samaria in the north, towards Jerusalem in the south ; nearer yet and nearer, until it is seen at Nob, threatening the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem. It is the coming of the scourge of God.

By this coming the judgment on Israel would be fulfilled. Most expositors treat this last paragraph as describing the Divine judgment on Assyria, by which her power will be broken. Now while it is perfectly true as the prophet has distinctly foretold,

that Jehovah will at last break the power of Assyria, the figures of speech made use of here forbid our accepting that interpretation of this passage.

If we return to the commission to the prophet after his vision (vi. 13), we find a description of the coming judgment under the figure of the felling of trees, in which the stock was yet to remain. If we take a glance ahead, to the burden of Babylon, which is really the burden of Assyria, as we shall see in due course, the prophet declares that when Assyria is overcome, Israel will rejoice, and he refers to the rejoicing by the declaration, "Yea, the fir trees rejoice at thee, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, Since thou art laid down, no feller is come up against us" (xiv. 8). Thus the figure of the felling of trees is that of the judgment on Israel,[1] and in this word of the prophet, Assyria is seen as the feller who lops the boughs and hews down

[1] When the figure was used of Assyria (x. 19) the fact was emphasised by the use of the word "his"; "the trees of *his* forest."

the high ones, and brings down the lofty ones, so that Lebanon falls by a mighty one.

Moreover the fact is not to be lost sight of that the very next sentence in the prophecy, which we shall consider in our next chapter, carries out the thought of the word spoken in the prophet's commission, that though the trees be destroyed, in their stock the holy seed will remain, as it declares that there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and so forth. Thus in dealing with the meaning of the sign of the son, Shear-jashub, the prophet shows that the remnant will be the vantage ground of Jehovah, as He moves forward to the accomplishment of His purpose; while he recognises that Assyria is the instrument in the hand of Jehovah for judgment upon the people of God.

3. *Isaiah.* xi.-xii. 4

SALVATION BY JEHOVAH.

α. *The coming One.* xi. 1-9

The Branch. David's Son.

His Coming. 1

(Cf. vi. 13, x. 33, 34.)

His Anointing. 2

The Spirit of Jehovah.

His Rule. 3-5

Its Aim. 3a

Its Method. 3b-5

Negative. The Senses. 3b

Positive. Spiritual Principles. 4, 5

His Kingdom. 6-9

Creation at Peace. 6, 7

The Child at Play. 8

The Secret. 9

β *The coming Day.* xi. 10-xii. 4

The Root. David's Lord.

The Day of the Realisation of Purpose. xi. 10

The Gathering of the Nations.

The Resting-place of Glory.

The Programme of the Day. xi. 11-16

Recovery of Remnant. 11, 12

The scattered Ones. 11

The Nations. Israel. Judah. 12

The Issues. 13, 14

Restoration of Unity. 13

Victory over Foes. 14

The Power. 15, 16

The Activity of Jehovah. 15

The Highway. 16

The Day of personal Praise. xii. 1-3

Restoration to Favour. 1

Salvation in Jehovah. 2, 3

The Day of relative Praise. xii. 4

Testimony to the Peoples.

The exalted Name.

c. FINAL. xii. 5, 6

1. *The Song of Faith.* 5

2. *The Secret of Faith.* 6

3. *Isaiah*

Finally the prophet turned to the interpretation of himself as a sign to the people of God. In this section his eyes were lifted toward the light of a far-off day. With judgment imminent he yet saw the ultimate issue of it all. The study of this whole book of Isaiah cannot fail to impress the mind with the sympathy in principle and experience of this great prophet of the ancient economy with the ultimate Servant of God; and in this particular section the underlying relationship is discovered, as he, whose name signified salvation by Jehovah, dealt with that coming salvation by describing first the coming One; and secondly the coming day.

This division is suggestive of the fact that the coming One is the Branch, David's son; but in the coming day He will be revealed the Root, David's Lord.

a. The coming One

The coming One is first described as to His coming. He is to be a shoot out of

the stock of Jesse, and therefore a branch out of his roots. By reference once more to the final word in the commission to the prophet (vi. 13), and to the figure of the cutting down of Lebanon immediately preceding (x. 33, 34), we see how through the remnant, the stock out of the original root is to be preserved, from which the shoot, the branch, will come for the fulfilment of the purposes of Jehovah.

The prophet then described His anointing, first inclusively, in the declaration that the Spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon Him; and then particularly, in the fourfold description of that Spirit, which is the Spirit of wisdom and understanding; the Spirit of counsel and might; the Spirit of knowledge; and the Spirit of the fear of the Lord. This description exactly carries out the suggestiveness of the name of the child born, the son given, which the prophet had announced in that first message to the inner circle of disciples. The Spirit of wisdom and understanding is that of the wonderful Counsellor. The Spirit of counsel and

might is that of the God-hero. The Spirit of knowledge is that of the Father of eternity. The Spirit of the fear of the Lord is that of the Prince of peace. These, as we saw when dealing with them, are the elaborations of the inclusive name, Immanuel, God with us.

Now notice the relation between all these things. The great first word is Immanuel. The fulfilment of that in the history of the Divine purpose is the birth of a child, and the giving of a son, whose name is to be fourfold as announced. The prophet now declares that the Deliverer is to be a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, that is, the child born unto us; but He is also to be the Branch out of his roots, that is, the Son given, and His anointing is to be that of the fulness of the Spirit of Jehovah, in fourfold character as described, perfectly harmonising with the fourfold name as announced.

The prophet immediately proceeded to the description of His rule. Its aim is that of the establishment of the fear of the

Lord, which is the principle of purity, and therefore the foundation of peace.

The method of His rule is first described negatively. He will not judge after the sight of His eyes, nor decide after the hearing of His ears; that is to say, judgment based upon the observation possible by the senses, which is the only basis of human judgment, He will abandon. The method is then stated positively. His judgment will be based upon spiritual and therefore continual principles, those of righteousness and equity and judgment.

Finally in poetic phrasing the prophet described His Kingdom. It will be a Kingdom of perfect peace from which all the things which are contrary to peace, will be banished. It will be a Kingdom in which the child will be able to play in fulfilment of the first Divine intention for it. The secret of victory will be that through this coming One the earth will be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters cover the sea.

β. The coming Day

The prophet then described with yet greater detail the coming day. It will be a day of the rule of the Root of Jesse, which is a recognition of the fact that David's son, the Branch, is also David's Lord, the Root. There is a fourfold description of His day indicated by the repetition of the phrase, "in that day."

First, it will be a day of the realisation of purpose. The Deliverer will stand not only as the King of the chosen people, but an ensign for the peoples, gathering to Himself the nations; and His reign will be the resting-place of glory. In that great vision which prepared the prophet for his profounder ministry, he had seen the enthroned Jehovah, and had listened to the song of the seraphim which declared that the fulness of the whole earth is the glory of Jehovah. In this vision he sees the Deliverer enthroned, and under His dominion the fulfilment of the ideal, His resting-place is glorious. There is signifi-

cance moreover, in this description of the Kingdom as the resting-place of the Deliverer. Never until that final purpose of peace is accomplished will He find rest. Such a consideration inevitably brings to mind the word of the One in Whom these prophecies are fulfilled, "My Father worketh even until now, and I work."

The prophet then described the programme of the day. It will first be a day for the recovery of the remnant. The scattered ones will be re-gathered from all the places to which they have been driven, around His ensign, which is an ensign for the nations, for the outcasts of Israel, and the dispersed of Judah, from the four corners of the earth. Gathered about that ensign the issues will be first the restoration of unity as between the divided nation of God. The envy of Ephraim will depart, and Judah will not vex Ephraim. In that restored unity they will come to the hour of perfect victory over their foes, and all this will be accomplished in the power of the activity of Jehovah, Who will

create a highway along which the remnant of His people will pass.

That day will be a day of personal praise. Israel will celebrate in glad and exultant language its restoration to Divine favour. "I will give thanks unto Thee, O Jehovah; for though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortest me"; and will declare that her salvation is of God, that Jehovah alone is her strength, her song, and her salvation. Failure to realise these things has been the cause of all her suffering. The recognition of them, and submission to them, will be the outcome of the work of the Deliverer, and create the glad experience of His day.

The day moreover will be one of relative praise, that is of the praise of the peoples. Israel will cry to the nations, "Give thanks unto Jehovah, call upon His name," and thus fulfil the purpose of testimony for which she was at first created.

c. FINAL

This first section of the private ministry, which has been one of interpretation to the remnant, after the binding of the testimony, and the sealing of the teaching among the disciples, is that of an outburst of praise. When the command was laid upon the prophet thus to bind the testimony and seal the teaching, he responded with the word of obedient patience, "I will wait for Jehovah, that hideth His face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for Him." In faith he had described the day of light, of the coming of the child and the son, ending by faith with the words, "The zeal of the Lord of hosts shall perform this."

Now finally addressing himself to that little inner circle he cried "Sing unto Jehovah; for He hath done excellent things; let this be known in all the earth." It was the word of a strong faith which dared to speak of the ultimate victory in the tenses of accomplished things, even

though for the moment the circumstances were those of darkness and of desolation.

The last word reveals the secret of the faith. "Great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee." All without speaks of failure and of disaster. The very chosen nation is torn asunder, and tossed with tumult, and passing under judgment. Not on these outward circumstances do the eyes of faith rest, but upon the Holy One in the midst; and therefore faith expresses itself in song, even in the hour of sorrow.

ii. THE BURDENS OF THE NATIONS. xiii.-xxiii.
a. BABYLON (ASSYRIA). xiii.-xiv. 27
1. *The Judgment foretold.* xiii.
α. The Proximity of Judgment. 1-8
Mustering the Host. 1-4
Marching of the Host. 5-8
β. The Purpose of Judgment. 9-16
The Punishment of Evil. 9-12
The Destruction of Evil. 13-16
γ. The Process of Judgment. 17-22
Media against Assyria. 17-19
The abiding Ruin. 20-22
2. *The Restoration of Israel.* xiv. 1, 2
α Jehovah. 1
Compassion.
Choose.
β. The Peoples. 2
Submission.
Service.
3. *The Parable of Israel.* xiv. 3-21
α First Strophe. 3-8
The Earth set free.
β. Second Strophe. 9-11
Sheol troubled.
γ. Third Strophe. 12-15
The Sin described.
δ. Fourth Strophe. 16-19
The Destruction.
ε. Fifth Strophe. 20, 21
Extermination.
4. *Summary of Sentence.* xiv. 22, 23
α. Jehovah's Act.
β. Assyria's Doom.
5. *Direct Application.* xiv. 24-27
α. The Oath of Jehovah. 24, 25
The Destruction of Assyria. 24, 25a
The Freeing of His People. 25b
β. The Certainty. 26, 27
Purpose and Power. 26
Irrevocable. 27

ii. The Burdens of the Nations

The second part of the prophet's ministry to the remnant consists of the burdens of the nations, in which he interpreted to his children the activity of the Divine government, as he dealt with the manifestations of national sin, and consequent Divine judgments thereupon.

There are ten sections, which may thus be tabulated; Assyria, the lust for empire; Philistia, a false hope; Moab, pride; Damascus, rebellious alliance; Egypt, oppression; Babylon, luxury; Edom, animalism; Arabia, Ishmaelism; Jerusalem, forgetfulness of God; Tyre, the oppression of commerce.

a. babylon (assyria)

The first of the burdens of the nations has to do with Assyria. It will be found that the burden of Babylon comes later (xxi. 1–10.)[1] In dealing with the doom of Assyria the prophet foretold its judgment;

[1] In support of this view the reader is referred to Dr. Thirtle's "Old Testament Problems."

announced the restoration of Israel; uttered the parable of Israel; pronounced the sentence; and applied the burden.

1. *The Judgment foretold*

In graphic language the prophet announced the proximity of judgment, describing first the mustering of the hosts, and then their marching. Again the supreme note is that of the government of God. Those who are to come against Assyria are not named, but are described as the "consecrated ones" of Jehovah, His "mighty men," His "proudly exulting ones," or as the margin has it, those who "exult in His majesty." The noise of the mobilisation of the hosts was heard by the prophet, and he declared that Jehovah mustered the host for the battle.

That host is then seen marching toward the accomplishment of His purpose, under His direct guidance; and the enemies of Jehovah are described in the panic which will seize them at the approach of judgment.

The prophet proceeded to declare the purpose of this judgment. The day of the Lord would be a day for the destruction of sinners out of the land, which they had polluted. The peculiar sin of the oppressor had been that of arrogancy and haughtiness, against which Jehovah would proceed in judgment by the army which He would raise up.

Finally the prophet described the process of judgment, naming the Medes as the people who would come against Assyria and destroy her. The Medes here must not be confused with those who subsequently joined with the Persians. All recent research has proved that these two peoples must be distinguished.[1] These people, acting under the government of Jehovah, would not be bought off, but with relentless determination would prosecute their campaign until the whole land was rendered destitute and desolate.

[1] For fuller information the reader should consult Murray's "Illustrated Bible Dictionary," in article by Dr. W. St. Clare Tisdall; and article by Sayce in "Hastings's Bible Dictionary."

2. *The Restoration of Israel*

The reason of the judgment determined against Assyria was that of Jehovah's compassion for His people. In spite of all their iniquity and desolation He would yet choose them, and set them in their own land; and instead of being captive, they would hold captive those who had ruled over them and oppressed them.

3. *The Parable of Israel*

The prophet then declared that in the day when Jehovah gave them rest, they would take up a parable against their enemy. Anticipating this great day of restoration, the prophet put into the mouth of Israel a taunting song, celebrating the downfall of Assyria. This moves in five distinct strophes.

In the first the deliverance wrought for the whole earth through the overthrow of the oppressor is described. The golden city had been the city of widespread op-

pression, and on her destruction the whole earth would find rest; especially the fir trees and cedars of Lebanon, against which, as we have seen in previous considerations, Assyria had come up as a feller, would find reason for rejoicing.

In the second, in language full of daring imagery, the song celebrates the consternation of the under-world at the fall of Assyria. All the great ones already dead are moved with astonishment that at last even so great a power has been broken, and such remarkable pomp brought to share corruption.

In the third the sin which culminates in such destruction is revealed. It is that of rebellion against the throne of God; the ambition which attempted to thwart His purpose, and contest with Him the right of empire.

The fourth announces the completeness of the destruction. While other kings sleep in glory, this proud potentate is to be flung out unburied, as utterly evil.

The fifth and final strophe announces

the utter extermination, not only of Assyria, but of its name.

4. *Summary of Sentence*

In brief and summarised fashion, the prophet then declared that the judgment would be that of the direct action of Jehovah, and therefore complete and final destruction.

5. *Direct Application*

The final word of the burden is one of direct application, in which no longer under the figurative name of Babylon,—the perpetual symbol of the principle of godlessness,—but in direct declaration, the prophet declared that Jehovah "hath sworn," that "He will break the Assyrian." It is the solemn announcement of the oath of Jehovah that in order to the freeing of His people, He would destroy their enemy.

The certainty of the prophet concerning fulfilment is based upon the fact that the purpose is Divine, and so also is the power,

because the hand of Jehovah is stretched out, and none can turn it back.

This burden of Assyria was in all probability uttered to the inner circle of the prophet's children during the reign of Ahaz, while Assyria was threatening the nation.

b. PHILISTIA. xiv. 28-32

1. *The Warning.* 29

2. *The Prophecy.* 30-32

α. *Contrast. Israel and Philistia.* 30

β. *The Smoke out of the North.* 31

γ. *Zion founded.* 32

c. MOAB xv., xvi

1. *The ancient Prophecy.* xv.-xvi. 12

α. *Her Desolation.* xv.

The Catastrophe. 1

The Desolation. 2-9

The Mourning. 2-4

The Scattering. 5-9

β. *Her Helplessness.* xvi. 1-12

The Plea to Judah for Sanctuary. 1-5

The Plea refused. 6

The Howling of Moab. 7, 8

The Prophet's Lamentation. 9-12

2. *The new Prophecy.* xvi. 13, 14

α. *The ancient Prophecy.* 13

β. *To be fulfilled.* 14

b. PHILISTIA

The burden concerning Philistia is distinctly dated as having been uttered in the year that king Ahaz died. It would appear as though some power which had oppressed Philistia had been destroyed, and she had sent messengers to Judah, it may be, seeking alliance with her. Isaiah was consistently opposed to the alliance of the people of God with other nations, for any purpose whatsoever; and his message was of the nature of a warning. Although the rod that smote her was broken, she was yet in peril. There were other forces at the disposal of Jehovah with which He was able to deal with Philistia; and the prophet announced "a smoke out of the north," as indicating a judgment imminent upon Philistia. The only answer proper for Judah to the messengers would be one which declared that the refuge of the people of God must ever be in Jehovah alone.

c. MOAB

The burden of Moab falls into two parts. The first is an ancient prophecy, and the second a new prophecy. This distinction is made evident if the final statement is read (xvi. 13). The words, "This is the word that the Lord spake concerning Moab in time past," make it evident that the first burden of Moab had been uttered at some earlier stage in the ministry of Isaiah, and is now repeated.

1. *The Ancient Prophecy*

The ancient burden commences by declaring the desolation determined upon Moab; and then by describing her consequent helplessness.

a. Her Desolation

A catastrophe will overtake Moab in a night, in which two of her chief cities will be swept out. The resulting desolation is graphically portrayed. Her people are seen gathering in their high places, mourning

and lamenting with all the signs of overwhelming grief.

So terrible is the desolation that even the prophet exclaimed "My heart crieth out for Moab." Her nobles are scattered in every direction, and all their wealth; and no refuge is found for them.

β. Her Helplessness

Having crossed into Edom, the scattered people would appeal to Judah for sanctuary, offering to send to her the tribute which they had been accustomed to pay to Israel (2 Kings iii. 4); asking that they might find refuge under the government of the throne of David.

The language attributed to Moab here is interesting as revealing an understanding of the Divine purpose in the establishment of the Hebrew people.

The plea of Moab will not be granted. Judah will refuse because of the arrogancy and pride of Moab, which are known to her.

The result will be the renewed mourning

of Moab, consequent upon the desolation overtaking her land.

So terrible will this desolation be that the ancient prophecy ends in lamentation.

2. *The New Prophecy*

As we have seen, the prophet now declared that this was a word spoken by Jehovah in time past concerning Moab, which must now inevitably be fulfilled. The time-limit was set. Within three years the glory of Moab would be brought into contempt.

It is most interesting to notice that the principle of the remnant obtains even here. As in the case of Assyria "the remnant of the trees of his forest shall be few that a child might write them" (x. 19), so in that of Moab the "remnant shall be very small and of no account." Yet the fact remains that in the government of God, even when His method is that of judgment, there is always the discrimination which preserves enough to constitute a nucleus toward final restoration.

d. DAMASCUS xvii., 1-11

1. *The Doom of Damascus.* 1-3

α. *Declared.* 1, 2

β. *The Effect on Ephraim.* 3

2. *The Judgment on Ephraim.* 4-6

α. *Wasting.* 4

β. *Harvest.* 5

γ. *Olives (A Remnant).* 6

3. *The Effect.* 7, 8

α. *Return to God.* 7

β. *From Idols.* 8

4. *The Reason of Judgment.* 9-11

α. *The Sentence repeated.* 9

β *The Sin.* 10, 11

d. DAMASCUS

The burden of Damascus announces its doom. It is evident however that the prophet had in mind an alliance which had been entered into between Israel or Ephraim, and Damascus. He declared the doom of Damascus; announced the judgment on Ephraim; foretold the effect; and finally stated the reason of the judgment.

1. *The Doom of Damascus*

The utter destruction of Damascus is foretold. The place of it will be so desolate that flocks will lie down without fear. This declaration is made in order to show the effect which the destruction of Damascus will produce upon Ephraim. She has been trusting to Damascus to shield her from the threatened attack of Assyria. Thus in the destruction of Damascus, the fortress of Ephraim will cease.

2. *The Judgment on Ephraim*

The result of this destruction will be that of judgment on Ephraim, which judgment

the prophet described under three figures; first, that of wasting disease; second, that of the harvest; and the third, that of the shaking of the olive tree. While the judgment will be severe, it will not issue in the total destruction of Ephraim, and the fact of the preservation of the remnant is indicated by the "two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough," and the "four or five in the outmost branches of a fruitful tree."

3. *The Effect*

This paragraph is of the nature of a parenthesis, but is full of beauty, as it reveals the effect of judgment in the economy of God. It will produce in a remnant, at least, a return to God, and the consequent putting away of idols. Through processes of judgment Ephraim will be brought to say, as Hosea foretold, "What have I to do any more with idols? . . . from me is Thy fruit found."

4. *The Reason of Judgment*

Taking up again the subject of judgment, the prophet declared the reason for it. Repeating the declaration of judgment, by declaring that the strong cities of Ephraim would be like those cities which were forsaken before the conquering march of the children of Israel, he declared that the reason of such desolation would be that Ephraim had forgotten God.

The connection between the declaration that Damascus was the fortress of Ephraim, and that God was the true Rock of her strength, must not be overlooked. Having forgotten the true stronghold, she had put her trust in the false fortress. That was the sin which must inevitably result in judgment.

(INTERLUDE. PROPHET'S SOLILOQUY. xvii. 12—xviii.)

a. THE PROPHET'S CONSCIOUSNESS. xvii. 12-14

1. *Of the opposing Peoples.* 12

2. *Of Jehovah as Defence.* 13, 14

b. THE PROPHET'S PROCLAMATION. xviii.

1. *To the coming Ambassadors.* 1-3

α. *Description.* 1, 2a

β. *The Message.* 2b, 3

Back to your People. 2b

Wait for Jehovah. 3

2. *Jehovah's Message.* 4-6

α. *His Waiting.* 4

Watching.

Preparing.

β. *His Activity.* 5

At the right Moment.

Judgment.

γ. *The Result.* 6

3. *The Issue.* 7

The Subjection of the opposing Peoples.

Interlude. Prophet's Soliloquy

Between the burden of Damascus, and that of Egypt we have a paragraph consisting of two sections which begin with the exclamation "Ah." It is evidently of the nature of a prophetic soliloquy, and reveals the prophet's consciousness of the condition of things in the surrounding nations, and of his knowledge of the advent in Judah of certain ambassadors, all of which events were seen by him in the light of the Divine watchfulness and government. It falls into two parts, the first of which reveals the prophet's consciousness; while the second contains his proclamation to the ambassadors.

a. the prophet's consciousness

The prophet's consciousness was first that of the uproar or multitude of many peoples, all of them antagonistic to the people of God. It is a graphic portrayal of turmoil and strife among the nations in opposition to the people of Jehovah.

All this however he saw in the light of the strength of the Divine government. The nations rushing like waters would be rebuked by Jehovah; and in consequence would flee, chased like chaff before the wind, like dust before the storm. The one brief but remarkable declaration, "At eventide behold terror; and before the morning they are not," in all probability had special reference to the destruction of the Assyrian host.

This vision of opposing nations set upon the destruction of the chosen people, and of the strength of Jehovah's defence, produced the calm strength in the mind of the prophet which enabled him to say, "This is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us."

b. THE PROPHET'S PROCLAMATION

The second part of the soliloquy first expresses the prophet's consciousness of the coming of ambassadors. Who they were it is impossible to say. The figure of the rustling of wings may suggest the

land beyond the Nile, the land of locusts, or of the tsetse fly. The description of the ambassadors coming in vessels of papyrus by the sea would be in harmony with this view, as they would travel by the way of the Nile.

The message of the prophet to these men was that they should return to their people, and wait for the action of Jehovah. If these ambassadors came offering help to the people of God by suggesting some new alliance, the proclamation of the prophet consisted in a firm and courteous refusal of that help.

His reason for such refusal he then declared as he told of the message of Jehovah which he had received.

Jehovah was waiting. The figures made use of are those of preparation preceding harvest.

At the right moment He will act in judgment, and the figure is that of the gathering of the harvest.

Finally the prophet declared that the issue of the activity of Jehovah would be

the subjection of these very people, "tall and smooth," "terrible from their beginning onward," to Jehovah; as they would come to the place of His name, "the mount Zion."

The supreme value of this soliloquy of the prophet is its revelation of his consciousness of the strength and sufficiency of Jehovah for the accomplishment of His purpose, even in the presence of the turmoil and opposition of overwhelming multitudes. The true attitude of the people of Jehovah under such circumstances is made clear in the message of the prophet to the ambassadors, and is that of the recognition of the fact that Jehovah is watching and preparing, and will act at the proper moment, and that therefore of waiting for Him in perfect confidence and rest.

e. EGYPT.	xix., xx.
1. *The Doom of Egypt.*	xix. 1-15
α. *Jehovah's Advent.*	1-4
Destruction of Idols.	1
Civil War.	2
Failure in Counsel.	3
Oppression.	4
β. *Physical Catastrophe.*	5-10
The Failure of the Nile.	5-7
The Failure of Industry.	8-10
Fishing.	8
Weaving.	9
Building.	10
γ. *National Failure.*	11-15
The Rulers.	11-13
The People.	14
The Enterprises.	15
2. *The Hope of Egypt.*	xix. 16-25
α. *The Process.*	16-22
Fear.	16, 17
Submission.	18
Healing.	19-22
β. *The Issue.*	23-25
Egypt and Assyria.	
Israel, Egypt, and Assyria.	24, 25
3. *The Doom of Egypt.*	xx.
α. *Isaiah's Action.*	1, 2
β. *The Sign of Egypt.*	3-5
γ. *The Warning.*	6

e. EGYPT

The burden of Egypt is remarkable in that while it pronounces the doom of the nation which had so cruelly oppressed the Hebrews, it yet contains a word of hope for them, as the prophet, looking far ahead, saw the purposes of God triumphing over all obstacles, and His power winning a final victory over all peoples.

The burden falls into three parts; the first foretelling the doom of Egypt; the second proclaiming a message of hope for Egypt; while the third foretells an immediate doom, evidently as a warning to sinning Judah.

1. *The Doom of Egypt*

The prophet foretold the destruction of Egypt by an advent, and a direct activity of Jehovah, Whom he saw coming to Egypt, riding upon a swift cloud.

The effect of the advent would be that of consternation among the idols, and the melting of the heart of Egypt. The evidences of the power of Jehovah would fill

the mind of the people with terror, and shake to its foundation their confidence in their idols. This consciousness of the presence of Jehovah, issuing in the destruction of the idols, would result from the experiences through which Egypt would pass.

The first described is that of civil war, in which the nation is seen broken up in family life, in social life, in civic life, and in national life. The great secret of this civil strife as revealed to the prophet, is that of the direct action of Jehovah, "I will stir up the Egyptians."

The second description is of the failure of Egypt in counsel. Her spirit is made void or empty, that is, incapable of wise action. Perplexed, her people turn to idols, and to those who deal with the dark spirits of the under-world. This also is the result of the presence of Jehovah, "I will destroy the counsel thereof."

The last description is that of the nation led captive by a "cruel lord" under whose despotic rule they serve as slaves. This

again will be the result of the activity of Jehovah, "I will give over the Egyptians into the hand of a cruel lord."

These judgments in national life are to be accompanied by physical catastrophe of the most terrible kind. The strength of Egypt was ever that of the Nile, and the great river is to fail, with the inevitable result of wide-spread pestilence, and the withering up of all the vegetable life dependent upon the waters of the river.

As the result of the failure of the Nile there must inevitably follow the failure of those industries which have been the staple strength of the Egyptian people. Fishing will cease, both by line and net, when the waters fail. Weaving will also inevitably be at an end when through failure of the water, flax and cotton alike shall cease. Building will also be impossible, as the foundations are broken in pieces, and therefore all labourers will be filled with grief.

Contemplating this judgment, the prophet broke out into a description of the national failure of Egypt. Commencing with the

rulers he described them as "utterly foolish," as having "become brutish." Her princes are fools and are deceived, and by reason of this failure of the rulers, the nation has been led astray. At the centre of this description of their failure the prophet broke out into a taunt, "Where then are thy wise men?" and affirmed anew the fact that all this doom of Egypt was by the will and action of Jehovah.

While thus filling the rulers with folly, Jehovah mingled a spirit of perverseness in the midst of the people, so that they followed the lead of their false leaders with the folly of drunkenness. The last word describes the general condition of Egypt. It is without work, for the capitalist or the labourer, the head or tail; for patrician or plebeian, palm branch or rush. On all the land there rests the paralysis resulting from the advent of Jehovah in judgment.

2. *The Hope of Egypt*

From this foretelling of the doom of Egypt the prophet passed in a swift and

almost startling transition, to utter a message of hope concerning her.

The difficulty of the passage is admitted. It seems strange that such a word of hope should be found between two messages of doom. Whatever the explanation may be, the fact remains that this is one of the most exalted movements in the whole prophetic burden. It will be noticed that the passage falls into five sections, each beginning with that significant phrase, "in that day"; which so constantly recurs in the prophetic writings, with reference to some definite and decisive action of Jehovah. In the brief prophecy of Joel we have the clearest revelation of its significance, that prophecy being the result of a vision in perspective of the highway of Jehovah through the centuries. To Joel the day of Jehovah had always come, and was always coming.

Having declared the doom of Egypt, Isaiah's eyes were fixed upon some future day, a day of Jehovah in which even Egypt will be brought into submission to Him. The five sections already referred to may

be divided into two parts, the first three describing a process, and the last two the issue.

The first fact in the process is that Egypt will be filled with fear at the mention of Judah. Let it be carefully noticed that this fear has no connection with the doom already foretold. While the judgment of that doom will be that of Jehovah, His instrument will be a cruel lord, and a fierce king. The judgment of Egypt will not be brought about by Judah. This therefore is an entirely separate event, of which we have no further particulars, other than the declaration that it will be the carrying out of the purpose of Jehovah.

The result of this fear will be that of the submission of five Egyptian cities, which will adopt the Hebrew language and swear to Jehovah of hosts. The name of one of these cities is given, but differences of text create difficulties of interpretation. Some give it as the city of destruction, and others as the city of the sun. In all probability the latter is correct, and the

declaration means that the worship of the sun will be abandoned for that of Jehovah. The main value however of this second section is its declaration of submission, following upon fear.

The next and final movement in the process is that of the Divine action, the healing following upon the establishment of the worship of Jehovah. In the declaration that "there shall be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the Lord," we have a somewhat remarkable bringing together of the central symbols of worship in Hebrew and pagan religions; the altar of the Hebrew, and the sacred stone of the pagan. At the entrance to the land such stones are to be erected to the Lord, as a sign to all who enter, that He is worshipped in the land; whilst in the midst of the land His altar will be found.

In that day when the people of Egypt thus cry to the Lord, the prophet declares that He will send them a Saviour and a mighty One Who will deliver them.

It will be a day when Egypt and the Egyptians will know Jehovah, will worship Him, will vow a vow unto Him, and perform it; and in answer to this attitude He will heal.

The last two sections declare the issue of this restoration of Egypt, and brief as the paragraph is, it constitutes an exalted height of prophetic outlook upon the ultimate purposes of God in the world. Looking upon the nations which were immediately related to the chosen people, and those moreover, which were their supreme enemies, Egypt and Assyria, Isaiah saw Egypt and Assyria united in an alliance, based upon mutual worship.

Finally his vision was that of an alliance between Israel, Egypt, and Assyria; the issue of which would be blessing for the earth. The last words of description reveal the prophet's assurance of the ultimate triumph of the beneficent purposes of God; "Egypt My people," "Assyria the work of My hands," "Israel Mine inheritance."

3. *The Doom of Egypt*

In this brief paragraph we have the first intimation of Isaiah's consciousness or suspicion that the rulers were meditating seeking help from Egypt against Assyria;[1] which is developed more fully presently in the resumption of his public ministry.

For three years during the reign of Hezekiah, and in all probability during the time of the silence of the prophet as to public testimony, he went about Jerusalem in the dress of a beggar. In this prophecy he explained, to the inner circle of his disciples, the sign of his strange and long-continued action. As he had thus wandered naked and barefoot, so the people of Egypt would be led away by the king of Assyria to the shame of Egypt.

In that day the people who were hoping that Egypt would deliver them from Assyria, would discover the folly of their confidence.

[1] Unless the message to the Ambassadors in his soliloquy (xviii. 1-3) had such reference; which is doubtful.

f. BABYLON. xxi. 1-10

1. *The Vision of the Whirlwind.* 1, 2
2. *The Prophet's Horror.* 3, 4
3. *Babylon's Carousal.* 5
4. *The Process of the Vision.* 6-9
5. *The Warning to His own People.* 10

g. DUMAH. xxi. 11, 12

1. *The Cry from Seir.* 11
2. *The Answer.* 12
   - *α. Morning.*
   - *β. Night.*
   - *γ. A Call.*

h. ARABIA. xxi. 13-17

1. *The Vision.* 13-15
2. *The Interpretation.* 16, 17

f. BABYLON

That the "burden of the wilderness" is that of Babylon is evident from the declaration at its close, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen."

The prophet first described his vision of the whirlwind. He saw the Persian hosts sweeping like a whirlwind from the wilderness against Babylon. So terrible was the sight that the prophet himself was filled with horror, which he described in graphic and forceful language.

Babylon is seen in the midst of carousal, which is suddenly interrupted, evidently by the onslaught of the Persian whirlwind from the wilderness.

The prophet next described the method by which the vision came to him. He had been commanded by Jehovah to watch, and he had done so with patience, until at last, the vision completed, Jehovah made the declaration to him that "Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods are broken unto the ground."

The prophet finally addressed that remnant whom he was instructing as, "My threshing, and the corn of My floor"; declaring that what he had now told them he had heard from Jehovah.

In this burden of Babylon, the predictive element is remarkably present. In a little while Judah passed under the power of Babylon, who became Jehovah's instrument of judgment against her. The overcoming of Babylon by Persia did not take place for over one hundred and fifty years.

g. DUMAH

The burden of Dumah is characterised by brevity and great indefiniteness.

The prophet is still upon his watch-tower, from which vantage ground he had seen the destruction of Babylon. He hears the inquiry out of Seir twice repeated, "Watchman, what of the night?"

Towards the end of the exile it would appear that Edom had some kind of alliance with Babylon, and would naturally be filled with anxiety as the hosts of

Persia swept upon and overcame their ally. Looking far on, and listening, the prophet was conscious of this anxiety, but he had no answer that was definite or satisfactory. His only reply was that of the morning and of the night. In all probability he meant that the destruction of Babylon would be the hour of morning for Judah, and of night for Dumah.

At the moment however, he had no clear vision, and no definite message, but he ended by telling them to inquire again at a later period.

h. ARABIA

The burden on Arabia is equally difficult of explanation. It consists of a vision and an interpretation.

The vision is that of caravans, lodging in the forests, and being ministered to by the inhabitants of the land of Tema. They were fugitives as the result of war.

The interpretation of the vision is that Jehovah had determined upon the destruc-

tion of the wandering tribes of the Syrian desert.

If this burden is to be taken in connection with that of the destruction of Babylon, and the one in response to the inquiry of Seir, then the hosts destroying these wandering Arabs would be the Persians, who would come against Babylon and overcome it. The expression "within a year" does not necessarily refer to the time of the prophetic utterance. It is far more likely to mean within a year from the attack on Babylon.

i. JERUSALEM. xxii.

1. *The Sin of Jerusalem.* 1-14

α. *The Malady of Joy. "What aileth thee?"* 1-4

β. *The gathering Armies.* 5-7

γ. *The Siege.* 8-11

δ. *The Sin of Joy.* 12-14

2. *The Change of Rulers.* 15-25

α. *Shebna.* 15-19

His Pride. 15, 16

His Punishment. 17-19

β. *Eliakim.* 20-24

His Appointment. 20, 21

His Administration. 22-24

His Fall. 25

i. JERUSALEM

The burden of "the valley of vision" is a message concerning the sinful and hilarious indifference of Jerusalem in the presence of imminent danger.

It falls into two parts, the first being a denunciation of the sin of Jerusalem; and the second a declaration of a change of rulers.

1. *The Sin of Jerusalem*

The joy of Jerusalem was a malady, and this the prophet indicated in his opening question, "What aileth thee now?" The city was full of tumultuous merry-making. In the presence of peril there would be honour in the death of those who would perish in defence of the city; but the prophet declared with infinite scorn that their slain were not slain with the sword. Amid the rejoicing, the prophet was filled with sorrow, and refused to enter into the merriment of the multitudes, or to be comforted.

He then described the gathering of the armies against Jerusalem. The day was full of danger. Judgment from the sovereign Lord Jehovah was imminent. The armies of the enemies were round about, the valleys being full of chariots, and the horsemen already set in array at the gate.

The state of siege was next described. Within the city preparations had been made for defence; but the people were trusting to their own preparation, and had forgotten Jehovah, the one and only covering of Judah, the One Who had so constantly cared for His people.

The sovereign Lord Jehovah had called the people to weeping, and to all the attitudes and activities of grief, and of repentance; and their reply had been that of joy and gladness, of eating and of drinking. In all such manifestations of joy there was evident the consciousness of despair which really filled the heart of the people, in the words, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die."

In the presence of such a danger, joy

was a sin. The true attitude of the people would have been that of humiliation and repentance, instead of which they made what defence they could, and then abandoned themselves to feasting and to merriment. Such action was a final evidence of their rebellion against God, and He declared that the sin could only be expiated by the death of the people.

2. *The Change of Rulers*

Suddenly the prophet uttered his message concerning the change of rulers. There is no doubt that the joyful attitude of the city which he denounced was partly due to the fact that already the politicians were at work, attempting to arrange some secret treaty with an outside people ; and Shebna, whose name suggests that he was a foreigner, was in all likelihood a leader in the party favourable to such intrigue ; while Eliakim was favourable to the position consistently maintained by Isaiah, that all such alliance was contrary to the will of Jehovah. In

the historic portion of the book, Eliakim is found occupying the position from which Shebna is, according to this word of the prophet, to be deposed.

The pride of Shebna is first dealt with as the prophet challenged him as to what right he had in the city, that he should prepare for himself there a burying-place.

In language full of terrific force the prophet declared that Jehovah would hurl him away, and toss him out like a ball.

In his place Eliakim the son of Hilkiah would be appointed. While there is undoubtedly a Messianic value in this passage concerning Eliakim, we must be careful not to forget its first application. The prophet declared that he would be appointed by Jehovah, and perfectly equipped by Him for the fulfilment of his work. Moreover under the Divine direction his administration would be successful.

His ultimate fall is foretold. The nail fastened in a sure place will give way, and that because it becomes overloaded. The man Divinely appointed, will abuse his

power by appointing his relations to official positions. The result of this will be the breaking of the nail, and the cutting off of the burden imposed upon it.

j. TYRE. xxiii.

1. *The Doom of Tyre.* 1-14

α. The Catastrophe. 1-5

Her Harbours closed. 1

Her Borders desolate. 2, 3

Her Sea abandoned. 4

Her Ally affrighted. 5

β. The Cause. 6-9

The Desolation. 6, 7

The Act of Jehovah. 8, 9

γ. The Completeness. 10-14

Described. 10-13

Mourned. 14

2. *The Future.* 15-18

α. Seventy Years. 15, 16

β. After seventy Years. 17, 18

j. TYRE

The burden of Tyre falls into two parts. The first is a song in three movements, setting forth her doom. The second is a prediction of a restoration, for the purposes of Jehovah.

1. *The Doom of Tyre*

The first movement in the song is a graphic description of a catastrophe which has overtaken her. Her returning ships find the city laid waste, without a house standing, and the harbours blocked, so that there is no entering in. Her borders are desolate, and the inhabitants of the coast land are amazed at the desolation of the city which had been the mart of nations. The sea itself, which had been the highway of her traffic, is abandoned. When Egypt receives the report of the desolation of her ally, she is filled with fear.

The second movement of the song reveals the cause of the desolation. That desolation is again contemplated in its entirety,

and in taunting measure the prophet, addressing the inhabitants of the coast land, inquired whether this was the joyous city. He then asked the cause, and replied that her destruction was the act of Jehovah. The central declaration of the song is this, "The Lord of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth." The only glory of Tyre had been that of her material prosperity, and her destruction was the Divine rebuke of such failure.

In view of this fact the desolation is again described in all its completeness, and the song ends on the note with which it commenced, "Howl, ye ships of Tarshish: for your stronghold is laid waste."

2. *The Future*

After the song, the prophet uttered a definite prediction that for seventy years Tyre would be forgotten, after which she would be visited by Jehovah, and restored to a position of affluence.

It is to be carefully noted that there is

no hint in this prediction of any turning to God on the part of Tyre. Indeed the prophecy makes it perfectly clear that in her restoration she will again play the harlot with the kings of the earth. Her restoration is, in the economy of God, in some way to be of service to His people.

iii. THE VISION OF THE DAY OF THE LORD. xxiv.-xxvii.

a. THE VISION OF DESOLATION. xxiv. 1-20

1. *The Word of the Lord. Devastation determined.* 1-3

a. The Land and the Inhabitants. 1

β. The People. 2

γ. The Land. 3

2. *The Work of the Word. Devastation described.* 4-20

a. The blighted Earth. 4-9

The Working of the Curse. 4

The Reason. 5, 6

The Despair resulting. 7-9

β. The blighted City. 10-12

Desertion. 10

Despair. 11

Desolation. 12

γ. The Gleam of Hope. 13-16a

The Remnant. 13

Their Testimony. 14, 15

Their Songs. 16a

δ. The Prophet's Despair. 16b-20

The Sense of Sin. 16b

The Sense of Judgment. 17, 18

The Vision of Judgment. 19, 20

iii. The Vision of the Day of the Lord

With the arresting introductory word "Behold," the prophet turned from his burdens of the nations, to the third and final section of that second circle of his ministry, which was conducted in private on behalf of the remnant. In this section the prophecy takes a wider outlook, as the result of the prophet's vision of the whole earth as being under the government of the throne of God. The theme is that of the vision of the day of the Lord, and the treatment falls into two parts; first, the vision of desolation; and secondly, the vision of restoration.

a. the vision of desolation

In the prophecy of coming desolation there are two movements, the first of which declares that the word of the Lord announces the determination of Jehovah to visit the earth in judgment; while the second describes the work of Jehovah in carrying out His word.

1. *The Word of the Lord. Devastation determined*

The description is first in general terms, and announces the fact that Jehovah will reduce the land to barrenness and confusion, with the result that the inhabitants will be scattered.

With particular care the prophet next pointed out that this judgment would affect all classes of the community alike. When the fruitfulness of the land ceases, the people must inevitably be reduced to the common level of poverty and suffering.

The declaration that the land is thus to be emptied and spoiled is repeated with new emphasis, the prophet declaring that it must be so because Jehovah has spoken the word.

2. *The Work of the Word. Devastation described*

The prophet immediately proceeded to describe the devastation, dealing first in detail with the land. The working of the

curse is seen in the perishing of the land and of the habitable world, and the consequent languishing of the lofty ones, or rulers of the people.

The reason of this is then distinctly declared to be the sin of the people; and that sin is described carefully as transgression of the laws, changing of the ordinance, and breaking of the covenant. This moral malady of the people is transmitted to the earth itself, so that it also is polluted. This is a remarkable setting forth of the fact that when man, the lord of creation, fails in purity, he communicates to the whole creation beneath him the pollution of his own moral failure; with the result that the polluted earth reacts in judgment upon him to his destruction.

The prophet finally described the despair resulting. All mirth, rejoicing, and songs cease; and the very means by which men had falsely sought for joy become occasions of despair and of bitterness.

This destruction of the land is focussed in the destruction of the city which the

prophet described as deserted, filled with despair, and abandoned to desolation.

As the prophet looked out upon this terrible scene, he saw a gleam of light, and listened to songs from the uttermost part of the earth.

He recognised that even amid such destruction the remnant would remain. In the burden of Damascus he had declared that in the day of judgment, "There shall be left therein gleanings, as the shaking of an olive tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost branches of a fruitful tree"; so now the same figure was present to his mind as he declared, "Thus shall it be in the midst of the earth among the peoples, as the shaking of an olive tree, as the grape gleanings when the vintage is done." These few people constituting the remnant will bear testimony to the majesty of Jehovah, and call upon men to glorify Him as the God of Israel. The prophet heard the song of the remnant, scattered as they were in the uttermost part of the earth.

This note of hope gave way immediately to a declaration of despair, because of the prophet's sense of the imminence and awfulness of judgment. His sorrow was caused first by that underlying sense of the sin which was the reason of judgment, and then by the sense of the judgment itself, which he graphically described as overtaking the inhabitants of the earth. The final sentences set forth anew the certainty and completeness of the judgment.

b. THE VISION OF RESTORATION. xxiv. 21-xxvii.

1. *The Causes.* xxiv. 21-xxv.

a. The Reign of Jehovah. xxiv. 21-xxv. 8

Victory over Oppressors. xxiv. 21-23

Visitation. 21, 22

Victory. 23

Deliverance of the Oppressed. xxv. 1-5

The Procedure. 1, 2

The Results. 3-5

The new Order. 6-8

The Feast. 6

The Light. 7

The Comfort. 8

β. The Recognition by His People. xxv. 9-12

The Confession. 9

The Evidences. 10-12

b. THE VISION OF RESTORATION

That dark background of desolation throws up into clearer relief the prophetic vision of restoration. The last note of the message concerning the vision of desolation is that of judgment. The first phrase of the new section dealing with restoration is one which indicates the close relation between the two, "It shall come to pass *in that day*," that is, in the day of the Divine judgment. All that follows shows that the day of judgment is not finally a day of desolation, but that its ultimate purpose is restoration.

The section consists of seven messages, each of them commencing with the phrase, "in that day"; and the whole of them revealing the gracious facts concerning restoration as to its causes, characteristics, and consummation.

These seven move forward in a regular succession, revealing the causes as being the reign of Jehovah, and the recognition of that fact by His people; the charac-

teristics being revealed by the song in the land of Judah, the description of the judgment of evil forces, and the picture of the restoration of the vineyard; while the consummation is briefly described in the picture of the gathering of Israel, and the restoration of worship.

1. *The Causes*

a. The Reign of Jehovah

The first message is a declaration of the deepest truth creating the certainty of ultimate restoration. It is that of the reign of Jehovah. The affirmation which is central to the message is contained in the words, "The Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously." Around that, the prophet grouped the facts which result from that reign.

The first is that of Jehovah's victory over the oppressors. In the day of His judgment He will visit them with punishment, and gain a complete victory over them as He gathers them together, and shuts them up

as prisoners, and ultimately carries out upon them the full sentence of their judgment. His reign will be so full of glory, that though the high ones and the kings of the earth have been as the moon and the sun for splendour, they will be confounded and ashamed before Him.

The second is that of Jehovah's deliverance of the oppressed. This the prophet celebrated in a song which sets forth the Divine procedure, and the results immediately following. That procedure is based upon faithfulness and truth, and consists in the irrevocable destruction of the city and the palace, and those who have been in opposition. The immediate result will be the recognition by the oppressing people of the fact that Jehovah is the Succourer and Helper of His afflicted people; and their consequent rendering of glory to His name on that account. In figurative language, full of beauty, the song sets forth the fact of the strength and tenderness of the Divine care for the oppressed. In the day of distress and storm, Jehovah

has been their protection; so that while the weak and oppressed are protected and sheltered, the strong who are oppressors, are made weak and brought low.

The result of this activity of Jehovah will be that of the establishment of a new order which the message describes. In the mountain of the Lord He will make a feast, and cause light to shine upon the darkened nations, which will issue in the ending of all sorrows, and the wiping away of all tears.

Thus the whole description of the reign of Jehovah sets forth the fact that He will destroy those who oppress His people, and deliver those who have been thus oppressed, with the result that all nations will be brought into the place of the knowledge of Himself, while all the evils which have afflicted them will vanish away.

β. The Recognition by His People

The second message reveals the fact that the people of Jehovah will recognise this

fact of the reign of Jehovah in the day of restoration.

The confession of this recognition is first made, "Lo, this is our God." For His appearing the people have waited, and recognising His activity, they rejoice in His salvation.

The evidences of the truth they confess are those of His victory won over their enemies. These enemies are comprehensively described as Moab, perhaps because at the moment of the prophetic utterance, there were some special circumstances fastening attention upon the hostility of Moab. The picture of the discomfiture is vivid, as the enemy of the people of God is seen attempting to swim in the midst of the polluted water of the dunghill, while his fortress is completely demolished.

2. *The Characteristics.* xxvi.-xxvii. 11

a. *The Song in the Land of Judah.* xxvi.

Praise for Deliverance. 1-10

The new Order. 1-6

The new City. 1-4

Its Strength. 1

Its Inhabitants. 2

Its Security. 3, 4

The old City. 5, 6

Its People humbled. 5a

Its Humbling. 5b

Its Destruction. 6

The Process. 7-10

The Way of Uprightness. 7

The Way of Judgments. 8a

The Way of Waiting. 8b-10

Praise for Jehovah. 11-15

Judgment to Peace. 11, 12

The Triumph of Jehovah. 13-15

Praise for Deliverance. 16-19

The Failure of the Nation. 16-18

Deliverance by Resurrection. 19

A Call to Patience. 20, 21

The Attitude of Patience. 20

The Procedure of Judgment. 21

2. *The Characteristics*

a. The Song in the Land of Judah

Naturally following the messages dealing with the causes of the restoration are those which set forth its characteristics. Of these the first is the song which will be sung in the land of Judah in the day of Jehovah's ultimate victory.

The first note of this song is that of praise for the deliverance wrought, which is set forth first by a description of the new order, and then by a declaration of the process by which that order has been established.

In dealing with the new order the song puts into contrast two cities; the new created by the activity of Jehovah, and the old destroyed by Him. The new city is a city of strength, whose walls and bulwarks are salvation. Its inhabitants are righteous people, who keep truth. To them, and to them only, the gates stand open. The security of the city is that of the government of Jehovah. The man

whose mind is stayed on that fact, because he trusts in Jehovah, is kept in perfect peace. The foundation rock, the rock of ages, is Jehovah Himself.

All this is demonstrated by the destruction of the old city, whose people have been humbled, which is itself laid in the dust, and trodden down by the feet of those who had been oppressed.

This song of praise for deliverance then celebrates the process by which the victory has been won. It is the way of uprightness. The activities of God are the activities of uprightness, by which He makes level a path for the just. While it is the way of uprightness, it is also the way of judgments. In the midst of these, His people have waited for Him, while their desire has been towards His name and His memorial. In what may be considered as a parenthesis to the song to be sung in the land of Judah, the prophet declared that his soul had desired Jehovah in the night, and affirmed his determination to seek Him diligently because of his con-

sciousness that the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness in the pathway of the Divine judgments. To show favour to the wicked is to allow him to continue in unrighteousness. It is only by judgment that he can be brought to upright dealing resulting from recognition of the majesty of Jehovah.

The song then rises on to a yet higher plane, that of praise for Jehovah Himself. The hand of Jehovah is lifted up, but the people do not see it; yet they shall discover Him through His zeal for His people. The triumph of Jehovah is that of victory over the very lords who have had dominion over His people, and consequently victory over them, as they abandon these lords, and yield their allegiance to Him. The increase of the nation, and the enlargement of the land glorify Him, and Him alone.

Again the song becomes one of praise for deliverance. Looking back it describes the pain and the travail of the past; the days when in the midst of chastening, they poured their prayer out to Jehovah;

the days during which all their efforts were unavailing against their enemies; the days of their long-continued and disastrous failure. The new condition is as resurrection out of such death. Those dwelling in the dust awake and sing.

Remembering that he was still speaking in the midst of the circumstances of judgment, and that its processes must proceed to consummation, the prophet ended the song with a call to the people of God, urging them to quietness and patience "until the indignation should be overpast"; assuring them that all that which he had already uttered, would come to pass, because Jehovah was coming forth to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity.

β. *The Judgment of evil Forces.* xxvii. 1
The swift Serpent.
The crooked Serpent.
The Dragon.
γ. *The Restoration of the Vineyard.* xxvii. 2-11
The glorious Picture. 2-6
The Care of Jehovah. 2, 3
Thorns and Briers. 4, 5
The overflowing Fruitage. 6
The governmental Process. 7-11
The Restraint of Judgment. 7-8
The Purpose of Judgment. 9
The Picture of Judgment. 10, 11
3. *The Consummation.* xxvii. 12, 13
α. *The Gathering.* 12
β. *The Worship.* 13

β. The Judgment of evil Forces

The next message is brief and figurative, but perfectly clear as to its intention. The day of the judgment of Jehovah will be a day in which He will destroy with His sword the forces of evil. If the figures of speech were created by the prophet's immediate outlook, it is almost certain that "the dragon that is in the sea" refers to Egypt, because the term "the sea" is constantly used of the Nile. It may be that the "swift serpent" referred to Assyria; and "the crooked serpent" to Babylon. Perhaps the main value of the passage is to be discovered in the revelation of the methods of evil suggested by the descriptions; its swiftness, its crookedness, and its cunning.

γ. The Restoration of the Vineyard

The final message dealing with the characteristics of restoration is a song of the vineyard, which stands in striking contrast to the song of the vineyard in

the earlier part of the prophecy. That first song told of the care of Jehovah for His vineyard, of its failure notwithstanding, and of consequent judgment determined against it. This is the song of restoration, and it first presents the glorious picture, and then describes the governmental process.

The care of Jehovah is declared in language full of beauty. He first affirms its fruitfulness in the word, "a vineyard of wine, sing ye unto it"; and then declares the constancy of His vigilance, and the ceaselessness of His diligence, on its behalf.

In the presence of the fruitfulness of the vineyard Jehovah declares, "Fury is not in Me"; nevertheless if briers and thorns were against Him, He would destroy them; unless,—and the figure of thorns and briers is dropped,—the wicked will take hold on the strength of God; in that case he also may make peace with Him. The final description is again that of the fruitfulness of the vine which is seen taking root, breaking out into blossom and bud, and

ultimately filling the face of the world with fruit.

The process of such restoration is that of judgment, and this the message now sets forth. A ruined vineyard is always the result of failure, and upon such failure Jehovah can have no compassion. Nevertheless judgment has always been under restraint, but He has never smitten His own people as He smote those by whom they were smitten. If the word "in measure" is correct,—about which there is admittedly some doubt, but which is nevertheless in harmony with the thought of the passage,—then the teaching is emphasised that judgment has always been in strict justice, and only with a view to correction.

That is emphasised by the next clear declaration that by this judgment, even of the rough blast in the day of the east wind, the iniquity of Jacob is purged. The purpose of judgment is the taking away of sin, and the destruction of idols, in order to fruitfulness.

Once again the prophet described the judgment itself; in its result, that of the utter desolation of the city; and in its reason, that of the folly of the people, and the consequent inability of Jehovah to show compassion or favour.

3. *The Consummation*

a. The Gathering

The first of the two final messages dealing with the consummation of restoration re-affirms the truth already stated that Jehovah will gather together the remnant of His faithful people within the land; the terms, "the flood of the River," and "the brook of Egypt," referring to the boundaries of Palestine. These are to be brought together by the most careful selection, one by one.

β. The Worship

The final message takes an even wider outlook. When those within the land are gathered, a trumpet is to be blown,

and the people scattered further afield will respond, and the whole united nation will worship Jehovah in the holy mountain at Jerusalem.

Thus the final words of the ministry exercised among the faithful remnant refers to them alone. When they are gathered from far and near, and are united in the worship of Jehovah, all those larger issues of restoration with which the prophet has been dealing, will be accomplished.

III. THIRD CIRCLE. PUBLIC MINISTRY. xxviii.-xxxv.

i. CONCERNING THE CHOSEN. xxviii.-xxxiii.

a. FIVE WOES AGAINST THE CHOSEN. xxviii.-xxxii.

1. *A false Hope.* xxviii.

α. *An Illustration. Ephraim.* 1-6

The False judged. 1-4

The True established. 5, 6

β. *The Application. "These also."* 7-29

The Conflict with the Scorners. 7-13

The Carousal. 7, 8

The Taunt. 9, 10

The Prophet's Answer. 11-13

The Folly of the Scorners. 14-22

The false Covenant. 14, 15

The Answer of the Mighty God. 16-20

The Warning. 21, 22

The Method of Judgment. 23-29

Illustrations. 23-28

Plowing. 24

Sowing. 25, 26

Threshing. 27, 28

Principle. 29

III. THIRD CIRCLE. PUBLIC MINISTRY

Here, with an almost startling suddenness, we find the prophet again engaged in a public ministry, the messages of which occupy all that remains of the first great division of the book.

The atmosphere was that of political intrigue, and the prophet plunged into the midst of the public life of the people with passionate earnestness and strong determination to save Judah from the contemplated folly to which they were being advised by one political party.

The historic setting is that of the threatened invasion of Jerusalem by Assyria under Sennacherib; and the political, that of the attempt which was being made to enter into secret treaty with Egypt against Assyria. To this intrigue Hezekiah was at first a party, but was delivered by the influence of Isaiah.

The circle has two movements, the first concerning the chosen; and the second concerning the world.

i. Concerning the Chosen

The first movement of this final circle of ministry is concerned with the chosen people, and consists first of a group of five woes against the chosen; and secondly of one final woe against Assyria.

a. five woes against the chosen

These five are clearly marked in that each begins with the word "Woe." They all deal with the political situation, and set the whole state of affairs in the light of the government of Jehovah. They denounce a false hope, a false religion, a false intrigue, a false treaty, and a false trust.

1. *A false Hope.*

In this message we have a graphic revelation of the difficulties with which Isaiah had to contend, and of his unswerving loyalty to truth. In the course of his dealing with those in opposition, he used such words as enable us to see the situation. The message consists first of an illustration, and secondly of its application.

a. An Illustration. Ephraim

While addressing Judah through the rulers, he spoke as to Samaria, the capital of the Northern kingdom, describing it as "the crown of pride of the drunkards of Ephraim," because Ephraim had become the dominant tribe. When these words were spoken, in all probability that Northern kingdom had already been carried away captive by Assyria, and the prophet was quoting from some message delivered long before, which had foretold that doom. His purpose in doing so was to show Judah that the judgment of the Lord had fallen upon Ephraim for sins similar to those which Judah was committing. The "mighty and strong one" of the Lord, was the Assyrian power which had been the instrument in His hand of judgment upon Ephraim. Ephraim had been false to its covenant through the seductive and destructive influence of wine; and therefore it had been judged. Nevertheless in that judgment Jehovah had been a crown of glory, a

diadem of beauty unto the residue of His people. The prophet's use of the term "the residue of His people" would seem to have had reference to Judah who, because of a greater measure of loyalty, had been spared.

β. The Application

The application of his illustration immediately follows, introduced by the words, "But these also have erred through wine," that is, the residue, spared according to the prediction of the earlier prophecy, have fallen through the same snare.

The first part of the application, while in the words of the prophet, yet serves to give us a picture of how his message was received, and reveals him in conflict with the scorners. It opens with a vivid picture of an unhallowed carousal in which priest and prophet were alike overcome by strong drink. With unutterable scorn he described the scene upon which he had broken in; the tables full of vomit and filthiness, so that there was no place clean.

Then in satire he repeated the taunt which they flung at him, "Whom will he teach knowledge?" that was the taunt of the priest; "Whom will he make to understand the message?" that was the taunt of the prophet. They mocked at his method because of its simplicity, and declared, with the lilt and accent of drunkenness imitating him, that such teaching was only for children.

That taunt he then answered by declaring that because they would not hear him, the message to which they would be compelled to give attention would come by strange lips, and in another tongue. They had been offered rest and refreshment, but because they declined to hear, the word of Jehovah would come to them in simple and halting speech, which they would not be able to understand, in order that they might be visited with punishment.

The prophet, turning from his satirical rebuke of the scorners, demanded that they should hear the word of Jehovah, and revealed his knowledge of the fact that

they were indulging a false hope in view of the imminent invasion by Assyria. Whether the prophet knew the details of this hope is not evident from this first address. His terms are indefinite, but reveal the fact that they considered that they had made such a covenant that the overflowing scourge should pass through, and should not come nigh to them. This covenant the prophet described as one with death and with Sheol, and so fashioned his speech as to make them declare that they had made lies their refuge, and under falsehood had hid themselves. Of course they had made no such declaration, but it was his interpretation of the hope they were indulging.

In the presence of that false covenant, he declared the word of the Lord God. He would lay in Zion a sure foundation, and the only true security would be that of trust reposed in that foundation. By righteous judgment all false refuges would be swept away, and unholy covenants disannulled. The overflowing scourge, from

which they imagined they were safe, passing through would tread them down in judgment.

The prophet closed this word of God concerning their covenant with a stinging declaration, full of satire and of contempt for their policy, "The bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it; and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it." That is to say, their hope was false.

Upon the basis of this word he uttered his warning, declaring that Jehovah would rise up in judgment, which he described as "His strange work," "His strange act"; because the activity of judgment is always strange to the heart of God. He finally appealed to them to cease their scorning, lest their bands should be made strong.

From this appeal he proceeded in a passage full of exquisite beauty to declare, by a series of illustrations drawn from agriculture, that the judgments of God are methodical, and perpetually move to purpose. The plowing of the plowman is not

for the sake of plowing, but preparatory to the sowing of seed. The sowing of the seed is also characterised by discrimination, fitches being sown in one way, cummin in another, while wheat and barley and spelt are sown in yet other ways. All this wisdom on the part of the plowman is the result of the fact that God instructs him aright, and teaches him; the prophet's meaning being that the God Who teaches discrimination to the plowman, is Himself discriminative in every process of judgment.

Again, in threshing, the same principle obtains. Fitches, cummin, bread corn, all are dealt with in different ways, and this also is the result of the teaching of Jehovah, Who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in wisdom.

Thus while the rulers were indulging a false hope, Isaiah by satire, instruction, and appeal, attempted to turn them back to confidence in Jehovah.

2. *A false Religion.* xxix. 1-14

α. *The Judgment of the City of Religion.* 1-8

Its Process. 1-4

The indifferent City. 1

The Judgment. 2, 3

The Distress. 4

Its Passing. 5-8

The Defeat of the Foes. 5

Their Discomfiture. 6, 7

Their Distress. 8

β. *The Judgment of the People of Religion.* 9-12

Blindness from Jehovah. 9, 10

Vision as a sealed Book. 11, 12

γ. *The Reason. False Religion.* 13-14

2. *A false Religion*

In this message the prophet denounced the false religion out of which the false hope had sprung. The reason of all political failure is religious failure, and with this fact he now dealt. The message consists first of the pronouncement of judgment against the city of religion; secondly of the pronouncement of judgment against the people of religion; and finally a declaration of the reason of the judgments.

a. The Judgment of the City of Religion

His woe was pronounced against Jerusalem, whom he addressed as Ariel. There is doubt as to the meaning of this word, and therefore as to the reason why the prophet made use of it in this connection. The Targum interprets it as meaning the Altar-hearth, and this accords perfectly with the fact that the burden of this message is that of the denunciation of a false religion. The city is addressed as the place of the true altar of God. She is

seen as indifferent, adding year to year by the rotation of her feasts. Against that city Jehovah will move in judgment, in order that she shall indeed be Ariel, that is, the true altar of God. The process of the judgment is graphically described, and the distress of the people vividly set forth.

The judgment which the prophet described would pass. The foes laying siege to the city would be driven like dust and chaff, and that suddenly. The discomfiture of the enemy would be brought about by the visitation of Jehovah in thunder, in earthquake, in noise, in whirlwind, and tempest, and the flame of a devouring fire. All this is a figurative description of the judgment which fell upon Assyria. The distress of the enemies following upon this discomfiture is graphically described. They who had hoped to possess will find themselves defeated. They have dreamed of eating and drinking, but in the moment of waking they find themselves faint and hungry.

β. The Judgment of the People of Religion

The judgment upon the people of religion is next described, first as that of blindness. They are drunken and they stagger, because Jehovah has withheld from them prophets who are eyes, and seers who are the true heads of the people. Consequently the true vision or outlook upon all national affairs is concealed, so that neither the learned nor the illiterate are able to read and understand the signs of the times.

γ. The Reason. False Religion

The final movement in this message is that of the prophet's revelation of the reason for the judgments which he had described. It was that of the falseness of their religion. The people drew nigh with mouth and with lips but their heart was far from God, and the fear they had of Him was simply that which they had learned by rote. Out of that religion of formalism

had grown the false hope already denounced, and Jehovah announced His determination to work wondrously among them, so that they should discover the folly of the wisdom of their wise men.

3. *A false Intrigue.* xxix. 15-24

α. The Conspirators. 15, 16
The Attempt at Secrecy. 15
Its real Meaning. 16

β. The coming Deliverance. 17-24
Restoration of Sensibility. 17, 18
Restoration of Order. 19-21
Restoration of Religion. 22-24

3. *A false Intrigue*

Having thus delivered his message against the false religion, out of which the false hope sprang, the prophet proceeded to utter his woe against the false intrigue, by which the rulers were hoping to secure the safety of Judah. The message consists of an unmasking of the conspirators, and a declaration of the truth of the coming deliverance.

a. The Conspirators

These rulers were working in the dark, seeking to hide their counsel from Jehovah, believing that in secrecy lay the probability of success.

Relentlessly the prophet unmasked the real meaning of their intrigue. They were reversing the true order of things, counting the potter as though He were clay, treating Him as though He were not the sovereign Lord, or as though He were devoid of understanding.

β. *The coming Deliverance*

He then broke out into a fine description of the coming deliverance, and it is to be carefully noticed that the deliverance described is a reversal of the judgment resulting from false religion.

After describing the restoration in general terms by the declaration that Lebanon would be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest; the prophet dealt particularly with his subject by showing that the first characteristic of the deliverance would be that of the restoration of sensibility, in that the deaf would be able to hear the words of the book, which had been sealed; while the eyes of the blind would see.

It would be also a restoration of order. The meek and the poor who had been oppressed, would rejoice; and the terrible one and the scorner who had been in power, would be brought to nought. Judgment had been perverted, but in the hour of deliverance this would be so no more.

The final deliverance will be the restoration of true religion. When the name of the Holy One of Jacob will be sanctified, and men will stand in awe of the God of Israel, then those that err in spirit will come to understanding, and those that murmur will learn instruction; that is to say, that by the restoration of religion, there will be the restoration of true statesmanship.

4. *A false Treaty.* xxx.

α. Its Uselessness. 1-14

The secret Treaty. 1-8

Its Rebellion. 1, 2

Its Shame. 3-5

(Parenthesis. The Journey of the Ambassadors. 6)

Its Uselessness. 7, 8

The manifest Failure. 9-14

Conceived in Rebellion. 9-11

Issuing in Confusion. 12-14

β. Its Needlessness. 15-33

The Secrets of Safety. 15-18

Waiting on God. 15

(Parenthesis. The Result of Failure. 16, 17)

The Waiting of Jehovah. 18

The Blessings of Salvation. 19-26

The restored People. 19-21

The End of Sorrow. 19

Renewed Vision. 20

Definite Guidance. 21

The Cessation of Idolatry. 22

The restored Land. 23-26

Harvests. 23a

Pastures and Cattle. 23b-25

Light. 26

The Method of Deliverance. 27-33

The Activity of Jehovah. 27, 28

The Song of His People. 29

The Destruction of Assyria. 30-33

4. *A false Treaty*

Now for the first time the prophet named the policy against which his protest was uttered. Having rebuked the false hope in which the rulers were indulging, denounced the false religion which made such a hope necessary, and exposed their false method of intrigue, he now named and denounced the false treaty with Egypt. This he did by showing first its uselessness; and secondly, its needlessness.

a. Its Uselessness

The prophetic woe is pronounced against the secret treaty because of its rebellion. The people are seeking counsel, but not of Jehovah; are weaving a web to hide themselves, but not of His Spirit. They are going down to Egypt to seek help from Pharaoh, without taking counsel of Jehovah.

It is next denounced because of the shame of it. The princes and the ambassadors are seeking help from a people unable to render help.

In a parenthesis under the heading, "The burden of the beasts of the south," the journey of the ambassadors is satirically described. They are wandering through the land of trouble, whence can come only the things of ferocity and harm, bearing with them their riches to a people unable to profit them.

The uselessness of the journey is declared in the fact that even though Egypt help, her help will be in vain, and to no purpose, the help of words rather than of works, because of which the prophet described her as "Rahab that sitteth still." He was instructed to write this fact on a tablet, and to inscribe it in a book that it might witness to them for ever.

The message then affirmed that the failure of the treaty would be manifest. It was conceived in rebellion by those who declined to hear the law of the Lord, who charged their seers not to see, and demanded that their prophets should speak smooth things, without reference to God. Such action must issue in confusion. If they put their

trust in oppression and perverseness, the sin of such action would constitute a wall-defence which would inevitably give way before the onslaught of Jehovah, Who would break it in pieces so small, that not one would be found large enough to take fire from the hearth, or water from the cistern.

β. Its Needlessness

From this stern word of denunciation vibrant with thunder, the prophet turned to a speech full of tenderness and of grace, by which he set forth the needlessness of the false treaty with Egypt.

The first movement in this teaching is one in which the prophet revealed the secrets of safety. The first is that of waiting on God. There are no words in the prophecy more full of beauty than those in which this truth is set forth, "In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength."

In a parenthesis he declared their failure

in this respect, and its result. They had said they would flee upon horses. "Therefore," said the prophet, "shall ye flee." They had declared, "We will ride upon the swift." "Therefore," said the prophet, "shall they that pursue you be swift."

This parenthesis is immediately followed by a word full of grace, revealing the consequent secret of safety, that namely, of the waiting of Jehovah. Even though they had refused to wait on Him, He will wait for them until they are restored to willingness to wait for Him.

The next argument in setting forth the needlessness of the false treaty is that of the description of the blessings of salvation, which will result from returning and rest, from quietness and confidence.

The people will be restored to their own city. There will be an end of sorrow; even though they eat the bread of adversity and drink the water of affliction; vision will be restored to their teachers; and they will hear the word of definite guidance.

These restored people will cease from

idols, defiling them, and casting them away as unclean.

The result of the restoration of the people, and the cessation of idolatry will be that of the restoration of the land. The rain will fall and the harvest will follow. Pastures will be provided whereon cattle will feed. Rivers and streams will flow from the mountains and hills. All this however, will come about through a process of judgment which the prophet described as "the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall." It will be a day of intense light in which Jehovah binds up the hurt of His people, and heals the stroke of their wound.

The final argument in demonstration of the needlessness of the treaty is that of a description of the method of deliverance. It will be accomplished by the activity of Jehovah which the prophet described by figures of speech full of fiery force.

The result of that activity will be the song of His people, a song in the night, springing from gladness of heart as they

gather to the mountain of the Lord, and to the rock of Israel.

That song will be caused by the fact of the destruction of Assyria, which destruction will be brought about by the voice of Jehovah. It will be a destruction producing rejoicing among those who observe it. It will be destruction final and complete, a destruction by fire kindled by the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone.

This foretelling of the destruction of Assyria by the action of Jehovah alone, was intended by the prophet to finally emphasise the needlessness of the attempted treaty with Egypt in the presence of the peril.

5. *A false Trust.* xxxi., xxxii.
α. *An Unveiling of Weakness. A Vision of Vanity.* xxxi.
The Prophet's Argument. 1-5
The false Trust. Egypt. 1
The Folly of it. 2-5
The Contrast. Jehovah and Egypt. 2, 3
Jehovah in Judgment. 4
Jehovah in Deliverance. 5
The Prophet's Appeal. 6-9
The Call to Repentance. 6, 7
Jehovah against Assyria. 8, 9
β. *An Unveiling of Strength. A Vision of Virtue.* xxxii.
The Prophet's Argument. 1-8
The true Trust. The King. 1, 2
The Wisdom of it. 3-8
Restoration of Conscience. 3, 4
Recognition of Character. 5
(Parenthesis of Contrast. 6-8)
The Prophet's Appeal. 9-20
To the Women. 9-14
Their Ease and Carelessness. 9, 10
The Call to Mourning. 11, 12
On Account of Judgment. 13, 14
Jehovah and His People. 15-18
The outpoured Spirit. 15, 16
The Results. 17, 18
The Prophet's Soliloquy. 19, 20
The Judgment imminent. 19
The Peace beyond. 20

5. *A false Trust*

The final woe is against that false trust in Egypt, which in the previous message the prophet had shown to be useless and needless.

The message consists of a remarkable contrast, the first part being an unveiling of weakness, or vision of vanity; and the second an unveiling of strength, or a vision of virtue. Each of these may be divided into the prophet's argument and the prophet's appeal.

a. *An Unveiling of Weakness. A Vision of Vanity*

The Prophet's Argument

He first denounced anew the alliance with Egypt, declaring the sin of it to be that it was a false trust in horses and chariots, because they are many, and in horsemen because they are strong; consequent upon the fact that the people had failed to look to the Holy One of Israel, and to seek Jehovah.

He then revealed the folly of this trust, first by contrasting Jehovah with Egypt. Jehovah is wise, so that all their plotting cannot circumvent Him, and He will certainly proceed against the workers of iniquity. With fine satire the prophet declared that the Egyptians were men, that their horses were flesh, and that when Jehovah stretches out His hand all fail together.

He then described the attitude of Jehovah; first in judgment, as the One in Whose power the people as surely are, as is the prey when in the grasp of a lion, the One Who will not be affrighted by all the shepherds who come forth against Him; and then in His determination to protect, to deliver, to preserve Jerusalem.

The Prophet's Appeal

In view of this revelation of the attitude of Jehovah, the prophet appealed to the people to turn to Him from Whom they had deeply revolted.

Anticipating their obedience, he described

how in the day of their return, they would cast away their idols. The final movement in his appeal is that of a new declaration that the Assyrian would fall, not by the sword of man. Their true policy therefore is that of thus turning to Jehovah, and casting away their idols.

β. An Unveiling of Strength. A Vision of Virtue

The Prophet's Argument

In the presence of this false trust which he had denounced, the prophet proceeded to reveal the true trust, as he described the coming Kingdom. This will be set up under a King Whose reign in righteousness will result in the establishment of order, and the consequent creation of refuge and refreshment for all such as are in distress.

The eyes of the seer were granted a vision of the ultimate perfection of the Kingdom of heaven set up on earth, around the Person of One Whom he spoke of as a

Man Who is to be "a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

The wisdom of trust in that King and that Kingdom is then set forth by a declaration of the results issuing therefrom. The first will be that of the restoration of conscience. Eyes will see, and ears will hear, the heart will understand, and the tongue will bear testimony accordingly. As the result of such trust there will follow a recognition of character, so that the fool will not be called noble, nor the crafty be said to be bountiful.

In a parenthesis he contrasted the activities of the vile person or the fool, and the instruments of the churl or the crafty, with the thought and the activity of the liberal or the noble.

The Prophet's Appeal

Evidently conscious of how different were the circumstances in the midst of which he was exercising his ministry from those

of the coming Kingdom, the prophet uttered his great appeal. In the early days of his ministry during the reign of Uzziah, he had fiercely denounced the sins of polluted womanhood, recognising the close connection between the corruption of the rulers and the pollution of womanhood. These woes have been addressed to the rulers, and now the final word is again that of an appeal to the women. He called them to abandon their ease and their carelessness, to gird themselves with sackcloth, because of the judgment which was imminent, in which they would be afflicted, by the destruction of the city, and the desolation ensuing therefrom.

The next word is one in which the prophet described the day of restoration which he saw beyond the process of judgment, a day in which the Spirit from on high would be poured out, and the wilderness would become a fruitful field.

In that day the bases of life would be judgment and righteousness; and the effects, quietness and confidence.

The final word of the section in which the prophet dealt with the chosen, is in the nature of a soliloquy, in which in a graphic sentence he described the imminent judgment; "It shall hail, in the downfall of the forest; and the city shall be utterly laid low"; and then the peace following thereupon, in a word equally graphic; "Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth the feet of the ox and the ass."

b. THE WOE AGAINST ASSYRIA. xxxiii.

1. *The Judgment of Assyria.* 1-13

a. The Doom declared. 1
The Method of Assyria. 1a
The Judgment in kind. 1b

β. The Confidence of the Prophet. 2-6
Its Inspiration. Prayer. 2
Its Expression. 3, 4
Toward God. 3
Toward Israel. 4
Its Assurance. 5, 6

γ. The Doom described. 7-13
The Conditions. 7-9
The opposing Forces. 7
Assyria's valiant Ones.
Israel's Ambassadors.
The Desolation. 8, 9
The Judgment. 10-12
Jehovah. 10
The consuming Fire. 11, 12
The Challenge. 13

2. *The Peace of Israel.* 14-24

a. Purity. 14-16
The Questions of Conviction. 14
The Answers. 15, 16
Holiness. 15a
Righteousness. 15b
Salvation. 16

β. Peace. 17-20
Centre and Circumference. 17
The King.
The Country.
The vanished Foes. 18, 19
The established City. 20
Worship.
Quietness.
Strength.

γ. The comprehensive Unveiling. 21-24
The all-sufficient Jehovah. 21, 22
Defence. 21
Government. 22
The insufficient Policy. 23
The Failure of Policy.
The Victory of the Lame.
The all-sufficient Restoration. 24
Material.
Spiritual.

b. THE WOE AGAINST ASSYRIA

In the last woe of the five against the chosen in which the prophet exposed and denounced the false trust, he declared that the Assyrian would fall with the sword, not of man. Throughout his denunciations of the chosen people for turning from God and placing confidence in their own political intrigue with Egypt, the prophet consistently maintained that Assyria would be defeated by Jehovah.

His teaching concerning the chosen ended with a final message, the burden of which was that of the pronouncement of woe against Assyria. It has two distinct movements, the first dealing with the judgment on Assyria, and the second with the resultant peace of Israel.

1. *The Judgment of Assyria*

The actual woe against Assyria consists of the declaration of its doom; the affirmation of the prophet's confidence; and the description of the doom.

α. The Doom declared

The method of Assyria was that of spoliation and treachery; and in her activities she had seemed beyond the reach of vengeance. The woe of the prophet declares that judgment will fall on her in kind. As she has spoiled, she shall be spoiled; as she has dealt treacherously, she shall be dealt with treacherously.

β. The Confidence of the Prophet

The affirmation of the prophet's confidence began in prayer. He cried unto God for help in the time of trouble.

The prayer immediately merged into an expression of assurance, first in God, by Whose lifting up the enemies of Israel are scattered, and therefore for Israel as he saw her gathering the spoil, and leaping upon the prey.

The affirmation ended with a statement of the reason of the conviction. To the prophet's vision, Jehovah was exalted, and therefore deliverance was certain.

γ. *The Doom described*

The description of the doom was introduced by a statement of the conditions obtaining at the moment when Isaiah was delivering his message. Without the walls Assyria's valiant ones were taunting the chosen. Israel's ambassadors were full of distress.

The reason of that distress was that of the desolation wrought by Assyria, in all the country lying beyond, which desolation the prophet described.

Finally the activity of Jehovah in judgment upon Assyria was announced. In the presence of the desolated country, and the distressed ambassadors, the great word of Jehovah was heard, "Now will I arise, saith Jehovah; now will I lift up Myself; now will I be exalted." As a result, the plans of the Assyrian will be chaff, their activity stubble. A consuming fire will devour and destroy the enemies of Israel.

The last word on the judgment of Assyria was a challenge by the prophet spoken to

those outside the walls, the valiant ones of Assyria; and to those near at hand, the distressed ambassadors of Israel. The former were called to hear, and the latter to acknowledge the might of their God.

2. *The Peace of Israel*

In dealing with the peace of Israel which will result from the judgment of Assyria, the prophet again emphasised the fact that it would be based upon purity; proceeding to describe the peace resulting therefrom; and ending both the immediate message, and the whole of his public ministry, with a comprehensive unveiling of the whole situation.

a. Purity

The consciousness that Jehovah is acting in judgment upon Assyria as a consuming fire produced a wholesome fear within the walls of Jerusalem. The sinners who had been guilty of excesses were filled with fear; and the godless who had turned to Egypt were seized with trembling. Look-

ing out upon the destruction wrought by the fire of the Divine judgment, they inquired, "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"

To that inquiry the prophet immediately gave a full and clear answer. The man able to dwell in fire is the one sharing the holy character of the God of fire; and who consequently walks righteously and speaks uprightly; he whose conduct toward his fellow man is that of righteousness. Such an one finds rest in fire, salvation in the God of fire. His position is one of fellowship with God; he dwells on high; his defence is that of the strength of God, the munitions of rocks; his sustenance is assured by God, his bread is given, and his water is sure.

β. Peace

The description of the peace consequent upon such purity follows in immediate connection. The pure in heart see God, and seeing God, see also all the breadth

and beauty of His Kingdom. "Thine eyes," that is the eyes of the pure, "shall see the King in His beauty"; "They," that is the eyes of the pure, "shall see the land" of magnificent distances.

The pure heart will muse on the terror of judgment, but only in wondering amazement, that it has passed. Those who in arrogance claimed tribute, and counted the towers with a view to destruction, disappear; the fierce people are not seen.

Instead of the beleaguered city filled with distress, the city of God is manifested; the centre of worship, the city of solemnities, a place of quietness, in which men dwell at peace; a dwelling place of strength that cannot be destroyed.

γ. *The comprehensive Unveiling*

The final words concerning the chosen constitute a comprehensive unveiling of all the truths which the prophet had been declaring.

First Jehovah is seen in majesty; the city without a river will be, by virtue of

His presence, a place of broad rivers and streams of defence, over which opposing ships will not be able to pass in order to destroy. The presence of Jehovah will be that of perfect government, He being the Judge, the Lawgiver, and the King.

Having thus revealed the all-sufficient Jehovah, the prophet referred once more to the insufficient policy which he had condemned. The tacklings are loosed, they could not strengthen the foot of their mast, they could not spread the sail. While this was true, the lame took the prey, that is to say, the wisdom of the wise was demonstrated folly, and the folly of the faithful was demonstrated wisdom.

In a brief word he described the all-sufficient restoration; material restoration so complete that the inhabitant will not say, "I am sick"; because spiritual restoration is perfect, in that the people will be forgiven their iniquity.

ii. CONCERNING THE WORLD. xxxiv., xxxv.

a. DESOLATION. xxxiv.

1. *Universal Judgment.* 1-4

α. On Earth. 1-3

The Summons. 1

The Sentence. 2, 3

β. In the Heavens. 4

2. *Edom as Illustration.* 5-17

α. The Doom. 5-7

From Heaven to Earth.

The Activity on Earth.

β. The Day. 8

Vengeance.

Recompense.

γ. The Description. 9-17

Destruction. 9-10

Desolation. 11-17

b. RESTORATION. xxxv.

1. *The Fact affirmed.* 1, 2

α. Restoration of Nature. 1, 2a

β. Revelation of God. 2b

2. *The Method revealed.* 3, 4

α. The Call to Courage. 3, 4a

β. The Coming of God. 4b

3. *The Process described.* 5-10

α. The Renewal of spiritual Discernment. 5, 6

Sensibility instead of Dulness.

Ability in place of Disability.

β. The Restoration of Material Blessing. 7-9

Water instead of Mirage.

Highway in place of Confusion.

γ. The Return of the Ransomed. 10

The Positive.—Gladness and Joy.

The Negative.—Sorrow and Sighing.

ii. Concerning the World

The final message of the prophet in this first division was the result of his world-wide outlook. It has to do with the government of God over all the nations and the whole earth. The same principles obtain in this wider exercise of sovereignty and power, and the message deals first with desolation; and secondly with restoration.

a. desolation

Terrible indeed is the description of desolation presented to the view by this message of the prophet, as he first declared the Divine purpose of judgment, and then made use of Edom in illustration.

1. *Universal Judgment*

The nations, the peoples, and the whole earth are summoned to hear the sentence of judgment determined against them. The prophet declared the fact of Jehovah's indignation, and announced His determina-

tion to act in a judgment which would involve the whole earth, and the host of heaven.

Without anything approaching definiteness of statement, there is yet clearly evident in this passage, the prophet's recognition of the inter-relation between the material earth and that spiritual world so closely surrounding the earth, so constantly influencing it, and yet so little recognised by its inhabitants. The heavens are involved in the judgment because they have been involved in the sin. In the ultimate day of judgment wherein God will deal finally with evil, the material facts, such as the darkening of the sun and the turning of the moon into blood, will be related to the severe judgment of Jehovah falling upon the hosts of spiritual wickedness in the heavenly places. To this aspect of judgment the prophet undoubtedly referred in this message.

2. *Edom as Illustration*

From this wide outlook the prophet passed to a description of the judgment of

God on Edom, which illustrates the larger truth already declared.

The doom of Edom is first stated. Judgment falls upon Edom, having been completed in heaven; this statement being in harmony with that which has preceded it, and revealing the fact that in the economy of God, judgment always falls first upon those spiritual forces which have been the instruments in the downfall of man and the ruin of the earth; and then upon those who have been so influenced. When the spirit of judgment touches the earth, the work is terrible and triumphant. It is here described as a slaughter amounting to sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Edom. In the second division of the prophecy this same act of judgment is referred to as introducing an order of peace. (See lxiii. 1.)

In that passage, and in reference to the terrible judgment accomplished, the language of Jehovah is that "the day of vengeance was in Mine heart, and the year of My redeemed is come." Here, in

the midst of the declaration of the judgment, the prophet declared, "It is the day of the Lord's vengeance, the year of recompense in the controversy of Zion."

The last movement is that of a description of the result of the judgment on Edom. The destruction is complete and final. The land is made uninhabitable for man, and utterly unproductive.

The scene of desolation is most graphically portrayed. The land becomes the dwelling place of every kind of wild beast and bird, and is haunted by evil spirits.

All this is so positively under the government of God, that the prophet shows that over the desolation He still reigns; and that the mating and the nesting of these wild creatures will be under His control as they fulfil the purposes of His will.

b. RESTORATION

The last word of the prophets of the Lord is never that of judgment and desolation, but always that of peace and restoration. The message of restoration here

stands in immediate and startling contrast to that of desolation. Yet it bears the closest relation thereto, for desolation is judgment, and restoration is the peace resulting therefrom.

In this message there are three movements. The prophet first affirmed the fact; secondly revealed the method; and finally described the process.

1. *The Fact affirmed*

As in the declaration of coming desolation, the whole earth was described as brought into confusion and emptiness, this poem of restoration opens with a description of the restoration of Nature to order and to beauty. To the desert there is to come the glory of Lebanon, and the excellency of Carmel and Sharon.

In all the gladness, beauty, and fruitfulness of the earth, men are anew to see the glory of Jehovah, the excellency of God.

2. *The Method revealed*

The prophet addressed those who were weak and feeble, calling them to courage in view of the fact that this restoration will be affected by the very processes of judgment which he had described. Again it is important that we should notice the connection between the declaration in the midst of the message of desolation, "It is the day of the Lord's vengeance, the year of recompense in the controversy of Zion," and this declaration, "Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God; He will come and save you." Thus the message of hope to the weak and feeble consists of an explanation of the vengeance already described. Through that vengeance God will move to this victory.

3. *The Process described*

Finally the prophet described the issues of the coming of God in judgment, which are also the experimental processes through

which the people will pass to the realisation of peace. In judgment God will act alone. "I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the peoples there was no man with Me." In the administration of the victory He will associate with Himself the people who have been afflicted.

The first note in the process is that of the renewal of spiritual discernment. The spiritual dulness of which the prophet had so constantly reminded them, and which he had so consistently condemned, will pass away; "The eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped." The necessary issue of that will be that in place of the spiritual disability which is ever the outcome of spiritual dulness, there will be spiritual ability which always follows spiritual sensitiveness. This renewal of spiritual discernment will result from the breaking out of waters in the wilderness and of streams in the desert; figures of speech which anew set forth the grace and beneficence of the judgments of Jehovah.

The second and consequent note in the process is that of the restoration of material blessing which the prophet described in such a way as to show the intimate relationship between spiritual condition and material prosperity. Instead of the mirage, with its promise of refreshment, and despair-producing failure; there will be the pool and the springs of water. Instead of the wild confusion of desolate places, traversed by evil beasts; there will be a highway so straight and plain that "wayfaring men, yea fools, shall not err therein." This is to be known as the way of holiness. The highway of material prosperity is secure because it is the way of holiness.

The final note of the process is that of the triumphant return of the ransomed of the Lord along this prepared highway, with singing and with joy; and their coming into possession of gladness and joy as the circumstances of sorrow and sighing flee away.

Thus the final note in the prophecies of judgment describes the conditions of per-

fect peace. This note is taken up in the final division of the prophecy which opens with the words, "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people." As this division closes with the promise of the creation of a highway for the people by Jehovah, the first appeal of the final division is one in which the people are called to make a highway for Jehovah.

The inter-relation is interesting and important. Here we refer to it only in order to emphasise the fact that these two prophetic divisions of the book of Isaiah interlace and constitute one great prophecy.

B. HISTORICAL INTERLUDE. **xxxvi.-xxxix.**

I. HEZEKIAH'S TROUBLE. xxxvi.

i. SENNACHERIB'S INVASION. 1-3

ii. RABSHAKEH'S TAUNT OF THE RULERS. 4-10

a. TRUST IN EGYPT USELESS. 4-6

b. TRUST IN JEHOVAH USELESS. 7

c. THE WAGER. 8

d. THEIR WEAKNESS. 9

e. JEHOVAH'S COMMISSION. 10

iii. THE FEAR OF ELIAKIM, SHEBNA, AND JOAH. 11
Request to speak in Aramaic.

iv. RABSHAKEH'S ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE. 12-20

a. AGAINST HEZEKIAH. 12-15

b. THE PROMISE. 16, 17

c. AGAINST JEHOVAH. 18-20

v. THE SILENCE OF THE PEOPLE. 21
Instructed by the King.

vi. THE FEAR OF ELIAKIM, SHEBNA, AND JOAH. 22

B. HISTORICAL INTERLUDE

The central division of the book of Isaiah consists of a brief historical interlude, the main value of which is that of the revelation of relationships between the prophet Isaiah and king Hezekiah which it affords. Four matters are dealt with, which may briefly be summarised as those of Hezekiah's trouble ; Hezekiah's prayer ; Hezekiah's sickness ; and Hezekiah's folly.

Of these the first two are chiefly valuable as they give us incidents which happened during the period of Sennacherib's invasion, and thus help us to an understanding of the latter part of the first division of the prophecy.

The latter two give us the account of two experiences in the life of the king, the one personal, and the other political ; and prepare us for the final division of the book, the burden of which, as to the first fulfilment of some of its messages in history, is occupied with the defeat of Babylon by Cyrus. These two events culminated in

Isaiah's blunt prophecy of the taking captive of Judah by Babylon, and the final division looks on to the ultimate overthrow of Babylon, and the consequent restoration of the chosen people.

I. HEZEKIAH'S TROUBLE

This is the story of the threatened capture of Jerusalem by Sennacherib, the approach of whom, had led the rulers to attempt an alliance with Egypt.

i. Sennacherib's Invasion

After a victorious campaign in which he had been successful against all the fenced cities of Judah, Sennacherib sent the Rabshakeh with a great army to Jerusalem. Upon arrival he commenced operations by a conference with Eliakim, who was accompanied by Shebna, his secretary ; and Joah, the chronicler.

ii. Rabshakeh's Taunt of the Rulers

Evidently hoping to take possession of the city without fighting, he delivered an

address to these men, which they were to report to Hezekiah. This address was of the nature of a taunt, and was intended to show his knowledge of their political intrigues, and his profound contempt for them.

Affirming his knowledge of the fact, he declared that trust in Egypt was useless, describing it as a bruised reed upon which if a man lean, it would pierce his hand.

If on the other hand, Hezekiah was trusting in Jehovah, was it not true that Hezekiah had taken away His high places and His altars, commanding that the people should worship at one altar only? This was a skilful attempt to bring the king into discredit with the people for having broken down the pillars, and cut down the Asherah, and destroyed the idolatry of Jerusalem.

Proceeding, in a tone of irony he suggested that Hezekiah should make a wager with the king of Assyria, offering if he would find two thousand riders, that he would provide him with horses for them. This again was an ironical reference to the

fact of his knowledge that Judah had been looking toward Egypt for horses.

Again changing his line of attack, he laughed at the weakness of these people.

His final word was the most subtle of all, in that he declared that the king of Assyria had come up against Jerusalem by the command of Jehovah. This would seem to suggest that he knew not only of the intrigue with Egypt, but of the influence of Isaiah, who had declared that the coming of the Assyrian host was part of a Divine programme in judgment.

iii. The Fear of Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah

The deputation from Judah now requested him to speak in the Syrian language, in order that the people on the walls might not understand what he was saying. The reason of this request may have been their fear lest his attempt to bring the king into discredit should succeed, and perhaps also their fear lest this declaration that he was acting under the com-

mission of Jehovah should fill the minds of the people, already verging on panic, with a new and superstitious dread.

iv. Rabshakeh's Address to the People

So far from acceding to their request, the Rabshakeh immediately seized upon the suggestion, and spoke directly to the people assembled on the wall, and that in their own language. He warned them against trusting in Hezekiah, who would be unable to deliver them, and against allowing Hezekiah to appeal to them to trust in Jehovah.

It was a skilful attempt to destroy confidence in both political parties in Jerusalem; that which was trusting to intrigue with Egypt, and that which, under the influence of Isaiah, was trusting in Jehovah.

He urged this appeal by promising that if they would yield to the king of Assyria, they should be deported to another land wherein they should have peace and plenty.

His final argument in addressing the people was one of warning against trusting

in Jehovah. The gods of other people had been unable to deliver them out of the hand of his master, from which he argued that their God, Jehovah, was equally powerless.

v. The Silence of the People

The influence of Hezekiah was greater than the Rabshakeh imagined, and in all likelihood greater than Eliakim thought. He had commanded the people that they should not answer any word from the king of Assyria, and they were obedient to the charge.

vi. The Fear of Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah

The address of the Rabshakeh however filled the heart of the deputation with fear, and they returned to Hezekiah with all the signs of mourning, and reported to him the words of the representative of Sennacherib.

II. HEZEKIAH'S PRAYER. xxxvii.

i. HEZEKIAH AND ISAIAH. 1-7

a. HEZEKIAH'S REPENTANCE. 1

b. MESSENGERS TO ISAIAH. 2-5

c. ISAIAH'S ANSWER. 6, 7

ii. HEZEKIAH AND THE LETTER. 8-20

a. THE LETTER. 8-13

1. *The Occasion.* 8, 9

2. *The Attempt.* 10-13

b. THE PRAYER. 14-20

1. *The Act.* 14

2. *The Invocation.* 15, 16

3. *The Petitions.* 17-20

iii. ISAIAH'S MESSAGE. 21-35

a. SENNACHERIB'S SIN. 21-29

1. *Against God.* 21-25

2. *Under God.* 26-29

b. SIGN TO HEZEKIAH. 30-35

1. *Continuous. The three Years.* 30-32

2. *Immediate. Departure of Sennacherib.* 33-35

vi. THE JUDGMENT ON SENNACHERIB. 36-38

a. HIS ARMY. 36

b. HIMSELF. 37, 38

II. HEZEKIAH'S PRAYER

The story of Hezekiah's action makes it appear probable that until this time he had wavered between the party hoping for help from Egypt, and that under the influence of Isaiah. This is the account of immediate communication between the prophet and the king.

i. Hezekiah and Isaiah

On receiving the report of Eliakim and those associated with him, the king immediately, in the attitude of penitence, entered the house of Jehovah, the place of sanctuary.

In the mean while he sent Eliakim and Shebna to the prophet with a message which declared his sense of the danger, confessed the futility of all political schemes, and acknowledged that his only hope was in Jehovah. He described the day as one of trouble and of rebuke and contumely. When he said, "The children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring

forth," he admitted the uselessness of all the preparations which had been made, and the helplessness of the city in consequence. That his message was one of repentance is evident from the fact that in this address to Isaiah he spoke of Jehovah, twice over, as "the Lord *thy* God"; and in the fact that he asked that Isaiah would intercede for the remnant.

The answer of the prophet was immediate, as in the name of Jehovah he bade Eliakim and Shebna to charge the king not to be afraid, because Jehovah would Himself deal with Sennacherib, filling him with panic, bringing to him a rumour which would hasten his return to his own land; and following him there, cause him to fall by the sword.

ii. Hezekiah and the Letter

In the mean while the Rabshakeh returned, not to Lachish, whence he had been sent, but to Libnah, another of the fenced cities of Judah against which Sennacherib had proceeded. There Sennacherib

heard a rumour that Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia, was coming out to fight against him. He then determined to make one more attempt to bring about the capitulation of Jerusalem, by sending messengers with a letter to Hezekiah. This letter was a warning to the king not to be deceived by his God, because the gods of other nations had been unable to deliver them.

On the reception of this letter Hezekiah again went into the house of the Lord, this time in the attitude of quietness and confidence resulting from his returning and rest. His prayer was characterised by reverence, simplicity, and directness. In the invocation he addressed Him as Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, and confessed Him the one all-sovereign, and mighty God. His petitions were two; first that Jehovah would hear and see; and secondly that He would save His people from the hand of the oppressor, to the glory of His own name. Between the petitions, with an artless simplicity, he admitted in the

presence of Jehovah the truth of the claim of the king of Assyria, that he had overcome the gods of the nations; but accounted for his victory by the declaration, "They were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone; therefore they have destroyed them."

iii. Isaiah's Message

Following the prayer, the prophet sent the king a message declaring the sin of Sennacherib, and announcing the Divine determination concerning him.

The sin of Sennacherib consisted in the fact that he had reproached and blasphemed the Holy One of Israel. His coming with the multitude of his chariots to the height of the mountains and the innermost parts of Lebanon, had been a coming in arrogance and in pride.

In all this he had failed to recognise the fact that he had been the instrument of Jehovah. The message of Jehovah concerning him was one which declared His knowledge of the smallest detail of his

action, and His determination to force him back by the way which he had come.

In confirmation of this, the prophet gave a sign to Hezekiah. The first phase of the message concerning this sign referred to its continuous character for the space of three years. Its immediate character was that of the departure of Sennacherib without entering the city, without shooting an arrow, or casting a mount against it; and the last word of the message of the prophet to the king was that of the declaration of the fact which through all this period he had emphasised, expressed in the word of Jehovah, "I will defend this city to save it, for Mine own sake, and for My servant David's sake."

iv. The Judgment on Sennacherib

In a brief paragraph the story of the fulfilment of the immediate sign is given. The army of Sennacherib was destroyed, and the king himself fled to Nineveh, where the judgment of destruction by the sword overtook him in the house of his god.

III. HEZEKIAH'S SICKNESS. xxxviii.

i. THE DELIVERANCE. 1-8

a. THE SICKNESS. 1a

b. ISAIAH'S FIRST MESSAGE. 1b

c. THE PRAYER. 2, 3

d. ISAIAH'S SECOND MESSAGE. 4-6

e. THE SIGN. 7, 8

ii. THE PSALM. 9-20

a. THE TITLE. 9

b. THE MOURNING. 10-14

1. *Cut off at Noonday.*
2. *Cut off from the Processes of History.*
3. *Cut off from Strength.*
4. *Cut off from Peace.*

c. THE REJOICING. 15-20

1. *The Gains of Suffering.*

α. *Dignity.*
β. *Spirituality.*
γ. *Peace.*
δ. *Testimony.*

2. *The Limit of the Outlook.*

iii. A POSTSCRIPT. 21, 22

a. AS TO THE REMEDY. 21

b. AS TO THE SIGN. 22

III. HEZEKIAH'S SICKNESS

The third story is that of the sickness of the king, and consists of an account of his deliverance; the record of the psalm he sang; and the addition of a postscript.

1. The Deliverance

The phrase "In those days" with which the story opens, and which is also employed in the same story in the book of the Kings, most naturally suggests that this sickness occurred during the time that the Assyrian hosts were in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem; and this view is supported by the fact that when Isaiah declared to him that his prayer was heard, he added, "I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city." If the sickness is to be interpreted by the psalm which resulted therefrom, we may safely speak of it as a method of chastisement by which the king was brought into a larger spiritual experience, out of which in all probability grew his penitence, as

expressed in the message of repentance to Isaiah and the request for his intercession.

When he was seized with sickness, Isaiah went to him and charged him to set his house in order, because he would die.

When he heard this message, he turned his face to the wall, and prayed to Jehovah, beseeching Him to remember how he had walked before Him. The whole story suggests that his sickness was due to failure on his part.

In answer to this prayer, the prophet was sent by Jehovah to the king to declare that his prayer was heard, that his life would be prolonged fifteen years, that the city should be delivered out of the hand of the king of Assyria; and in response to Hezekiah's appeal for a sign, as the postscript to the chapter will show, to grant him the sign of the return of the shadow on the steps.

ii. The Psalm

Immediately following the story we have the psalm of thanksgiving over which the title is written. The psalm falls into two

parts, the first expressing his mourning in the day of affliction. He lamented the fact that his life was about to be cut off at noon day, that therefore he would no longer be able to observe the processes of history, under the government of Jehovah ; that he was being cut off from all strength, waiting only for the end ; that he was cut off from the sense of peace.

Suddenly the note of lamentation is overwhelmed by that of adoration, in the celebration of the gains of suffering. Out of this experience of darkness a dignity of life is gained ; henceforth he will go softly, that is in solemn procession, with added dignity. There is moreover the gain of spirituality ; for out of these things of darkness he has come to the consciousness of the life of the spirit. There is also the gain of peace ; for he is delivered from the body of corruption, and his sins are cast behind the back of God. Finally there is the gain of ability to testify to the goodness of God ; for it is the living that are able to praise Him among the sons of men.

It is interesting to note the limit of the outlook of this psalm. It would appear that he had no clear consciousness of the life beyond the grave.

iii. A Postscript

The final two verses of the section declare that which is omitted from the first part; the first concerns the means which the prophet had commanded should be adopted for the healing of the king; and the second chronicles the fact that Hezekiah had asked for a sign which was granted in the going back of the shadow on the steps. The coming up to the house referred to in this request for a sign, is in all probability that described in the previous section, when in penitence he turned to Jehovah.

IV. HEZEKIAH'S FOLLY. xxxix.

i. The Embassy from Babylon. 1, 2

a. THE COMING. 1

b. THE EXPOSURE OF POSSESSION. 2

ii. The Coming of Isaiah. 3-7

a. THE INQUIRY. 3-4

b. THE PROPHECY. 5-7

iii. Hezekiah's Answer. 8

IV. HEZEKIAH'S FOLLY

The last brief record is of the folly of the king. After his recovery there came to Jerusalem an embassy from Babylon, ostensibly to congratulate him thereupon.

That their real motive was sinister is made evident by the attitude of Isaiah when he came to the king and rebuked him.

Hezekiah, flattered by their coming, exposed to their view all his treasures, and thus revealed secrets which should have been hidden from their eyes.

The prophet sternly rebuked him, and foretold the ultimate issue, namely that the very things which he had shown them should one day be carried into Babylon, and that his issue would be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. All this was literally fulfilled.

The answer of Hezekiah was one of submission and of thankfulness, as he recognised that for the remainder of his life there would be peace and truth.

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